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# Chihuahua's Missing Labor Movement: The Role of Emotions in Maquiladora Work

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# Chihuahua's Missing Labor Movement: The Role of Emotions in Maquiladora Work

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# Dedication

To Elena and Inés.

# Abstract

## Chihuahua's Missing Labor Movement: The role of Emotions in Maquiladora Work

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The maquiladora industry was established in northern Mexico with the objective of providing employment opportunities to the growing population in the region. However, the terms of employment linked to the global economy limit the organizational capacity of workers to improve their working conditions. These terms shape an emotional habitus among maquiladora workers that prevents mobilization and reinforces a "hard-working" attitude predisposed to tolerate unsatisfactory labor relations concomitant with industrial deregulation. In my investigation, I analyze the emotional habitus of workers through cultural, productive, and political deregulation mechanisms employed in the sector. The cultural tool promotes a new labor philosophy focused on safeguarding employment sources in Mexico; production schemes individualize reward and punitive systems that are installed in constellations of local and international authoritative figures; and the political component prevents legitimate forms of organization through coopted labor unions. As a result, predispositions of workers to mobilize grievances in the

maquiladora industry are unlikely. This report seeks to involve the social structures of emotions in discussions concerning political behavior and social movement literature.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

The *Industria Manufacturera Maquiladora y de Servicios de Exportación* (IMMEX)[1] of Mexico is an industrialization project begun in 1965 that was intended to reduce unemployment and quell political instability along the border. Maquiladoras, as these foreign-owned assembling plants are called, are part of a watershed program conceived for the border (but now expanded in central and southern states) implemented after the end of the Bracero Program. The Mexican government took advantage of the idle cheap labor along the border to attract transnational companies and added tax incentives to the mix of benefits to create strategic model to reduce unemployment, increase foreign investment, and improve Mexico's balance of payments while quelling social unrest. Transnational companies benefited from this cost-saving arrangement amidst a profit crunch in the late 1960s.[2] To implement the maquiladora program, the state set wage ceilings and flexibilized labor rights, forcing Mexican maquiladora workers to carry the burden of anti-inflationary policies meant to stabilize and grow the economy, while generating enough jobs to stabilize political unrest.

The periodization of the expansion and consolidation of the maquiladora program illustrates its objective as a mutually beneficial economic recovery measure for Mexican laborers and transnational companies during crises. The terms of the arrangement, however, have been unfavorable to workers who have endured a labor state of exception, since transnational companies can circumvent labor laws while Mexican states disregard

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[1] IMMEX was preceded by many economic policies stemming from border industrialization projects. The first policy was the *Política de Fomento a la Industrial Maquiladora de Exportación* of 1965 under the *Programa de Industrialización de la Frontera Norte*. In 1971 the Custom Code of the Federation is modified in order to promote the maquiladora industry by permitting in-bond manufacturing. In 1972 it is further altered to include the rest of the national territory.
http://www.index.org.mx/IMMEX/antecedentes.php

[2] Peter Baird and Ed McCaughan, *Beyond the Border: Mexico and the U.S. Today* (New York: North American Congress on Latin America, 1979),131.

violations. Labor resistance has varied in intensity and strategy throughout the border region--Matamoros, Tamaulipas, is an exceptional case of traditional defensive efforts through collective contract negotiations.[3] However, labor strikes or other forms of mobilizations are practically nonexistent in the maquiladora sector at large, aside from propagandistic *Confederación de Trabajadores de México*[4] demonstrations in Labor Day parades. This generalization is evident in the city of Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, which is where I will base this study. Tellingly, after the 2009 financial crises that led to significant number of maquiladora closures and reductions in working hours[5], there was not a single strike in the city of Chihuahua. In fact, the city has not seen a single strike, in any industry, in the last seventeen years.

The absence of labor mobilization in the city of Chihuahua is perplexing when considering the multiple violations to Mexican labor law and the apparent lack of state support for workers vis-à-vis foreign companies. A cultural explanation is insufficient to

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[3] Cirila Quintero, "La maquila en Matamoros: Cambios y continuidades," in *Globalización, trabajo y maquilas: Las nuevas y viejas fronteras en México*, ed. María Eugenia de la O Martínez and Cirila Quintero Ramírez (México, D.F.: Plaza y Valdez, 2001), 89.

[4] The *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM) was founded in 1936 as an effort to unify the labor movement and incorporate it into the post-revolutionary regime by president Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). This unification took place amongst labor conflicts and political divisions in the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario*'s (PNR) revolutionary regime after the Great Depression, creating a strong labor base for Cárdenas's administration and the new *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI). The officialist and antidemocratic nature of the confederation soon led to the national miner, railroad, teachers, and electrician labor unions to leave the organization. By 1939 all members we obligated to vote for the PRI. The CTM became the biggest and most powerful labor organization of the PRI regime, known for its antidemocratic and corporatist nature and reaching its zenith during 1953-1970 when the regime implemented import substitution industrialization. From the 1970s on economic crises, democratic opening, internal divisions and conflicts with administrations have debilitated the confederation. The new neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s have corroded the corporatist nature of the confederation, despite agreeable relations with conservative *Acción Nacional* governments that explain its survival. Although the CTM was opposed to the neoliberalization of the economy because much of its power was founded on the corporatist relations with the state, it has adapted to the new economic model through the flexibilization of its collective contracts and a more moderate business-friendly manner of solving labor conflicts. See Kevin Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State, and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

[5] "Banco de información económica," Instituto nacional de estadística y geografía, accessed September 28, 2013, http://www.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/bie/

explain this absence; much social mobilization has taken place in the state of Chihuahua, including the formation of an armed guerilla movement--*Grupo Guerrillero Popular*--in the 1960s fighting over land expropriations,[6] the *Comité de defensa popular* that organized rural-urban migrants and the urban poor in the 1970s for housing,[7] protests over local electoral results in the 1980s, and organizations of indebted farmers and feminist groups in the 1990s through 2000s.[8] In the last two years, inappropriate management of irrigation water in the state's northwestern *ejidos*, disputed national elections of 2012, and protests by displaced city bus drivers have generated mobilizations as well. However, all of these have been small and targeted at specific grievances, mainly activating groups directly impacted by government policies (or lack thereof). Labor conflicts in Chihuahua's maquiladora sectors during the late 1980s and early 1990s had the same characteristics and succeeded in only minor improvements in working conditions in specific plants.[9]

Therefore questions about the lack of mobilization in this significant sector of the city's economy remain. Could a poverty of resources[10] among the maquiladora working class explain the lack of mobilization? Could migrants from rural Chihuahua and other parts of Mexico lack the means and organizational experience to mobilize effectively against powerful transnational companies allied with local governments? Migration flows

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[6] José Santos Valdés, *Madera: razón de un martirologio* (Durango: Editorial de la Universidad Juárez del Estado de Durango, 1968).

[7] *Chihuahua, un pueblo en lucha*, directed by Trinidad Langarica (1974; México D.F.; CUEC, taller de Cine Octubre), video.

[8] Nabil Grijalva, "Movimientos sociales campesinos y feministas lideran en Chihuahua," *OMNIA*, January 31, 2011, accessed September 28, 2013. http://www.omnia.com.mx/noticias/movimientos-sociales-campesinos-y-feministas-lideran-en-chihuahua/.

[9] Sergio Sánchez Díaz, *Del nuevo sindicalismo maquilador en la ciudad de Chihuahua: Un ensayo sobre el poder en la nueva clase obrera* (México D.F.: CIESAS, 2000).

[10] Mercedes González de la Rocha, "Vanishing Assets: Cumulative Disadvantage among the Urban Poor," *The Annals of the American Academy* 606 (2006).

and drug-related violence could undermine the formation of collective identities that would allow political action frameworks; but could workers find alternate ways, maybe even individual efforts, to resist poor working conditions? How do maquiladora workers make sense of their and the state's submission to transnational capital?

My research on labor relations in the maquiladora industry has provided many explanations for the lack of mobilization and organization in Chihuahua that I have grouped into three categories. These explanations as a rule focus on Mexico's entire northern border region, given that specific studies on Chihuahua City are minimal. First, the Mexican state ceded sovereignty to the interests of multinational companies after a series of economic crises and thus works to reduce labor conflict. Second, the technological model operating in maquiladoras individualizes tasks and remuneration, thereby reducing collective interests. Third, labor unions have been coopted by the state and/or its economic interests, rendering them inefficient in the protection of labor rights and wages. These explanations provide the mechanisms for deregulation of labor relations since the early 1980s.

## MY CONTRIBUTION

My contribution to the explanation for the lack of labor mobilization focuses on analyzing the experiences of maquiladora workers in Chihuahua. I will begin my contribution in Chapter two with a review of maquiladora and social movement literature along with a categorization of deregulation mechanisms. Reviewing and categorizing social movement theories employed in previous studies helps clarify how deregulation explains the absence of mobilization. My contribution in this categorization is to systematize a series of factors—cultural, productive, and political—impacting the

possibilities of articulating social mobilizations. Additionally, the review identifies existing holes in the literatures. I argue that the perspective of workers themselves is often disregarded. Deborah Gould's framework will let me analyze how deregulation shapes the emotional habitus and political horizon it generates among workers in the city of Chihuahua.

In order to conduct an analysis of Chihuahua maquiladora workers' habitus, I need to contextualize their social, political, and economic conditions. The third chapter of this thesis therefore looks at Chihuahua's history as a border/frontier state, along with the political and economic implications of its location in the political map of Mexico and North America. It will become apparent that the identities of Chihuahuenses are marked by migration, isolation, war, and commerce, providing fundamental elements in the construction of emotional habitus. In the end, I will provide an overview of the emergence of the maquiladora industry in the state and city of Chihuahua.

In the fourth chapter I analyze a series of ten interviews to maquiladora workers and one former union chapter leader that I conducted in the summer of 2012 in the city of Chihuahua. This analysis will provide a much-needed perspective on individual workers, the maquiladora model, and their lifestyles. From these interviews I conclude that most maquiladora workers do not have grievances against the maquiladoras themselves, but rather blame themselves for resorting to them for economic wellbeing, the economy when they lose their jobs, and their coworkers and supervisors when they experience labor conflicts. The youngest interviewees simply consider their employment in maquiladoras as a stepping-stone towards a more promising career. A second group has become professionalized in the maquiladora industry and established a network strong enough to find good employment in them. Finally, a third group simply rejects the model and hopes for something better in the near future. Amidst varying views of maquiladoras,

none considered or had been part of labor mobilizations. This option is simply not in their political horizons. I hope to clarify how this emotional habitus is constructed and maintained.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter I will review the three main explanations for the lack of labor mobilizations in the city of Chihuahua. This review provides some context to the maquiladora industry in the border region. At the same time, it describes the tools of deregulation at play in the maquiladora sector. Subsequently, I introduce Deborah Gould's analytic framework that I will use in the formulation of an emotional explanation for the absence of mobilization in the maquiladora sector. I will end the chapter with a brief roadmap to the rest of my thesis.

## CHANGE IN CULTURAL PATTERNS

The geopolitical transformations effected through neoliberalism have changed cultural patterns in Mexican society and have as a result reduced labor conflict. Alain Touraine's (1985) theory on new social movements provides analytical tools to explain this transformation. He dismisses the relevance of counter-hegemonic historical movements, such as national-popular movements that end up in power and become totalitarian regimes (Mexico's post-revolutionary regime is a case in point); political and economic interests that lead to deregulation and *homo oeconomicus*; or neo-communitarian movements that seek a "pure nation-state." The most important battleground for power, therefore, is located at the cultural level that determines patterns of knowledge, production, and morality.[11] Tourane's analysis is helpful in the Mexican case because it localizes power at a macro level where Mexico's re-structuralization of production is in dialogue with compatible knowledge and moral patterns that influence

[11] Alain Touraine, "An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements," *Social Research*, 52:4 (1985:Winter).

labor culture.[12] Hence, neoliberal production changes produced new discourses of competitiveness, efficiency, and individualism that reshaped identity and cultural characteristics, neutralizing or eliminating labor resistance from its inception.

The neoliberal process that ended up affecting labor culture begins with capital's insatiable need to grow despite overproduction, leading to the deindustrialization of dependent countries. This expansion is clear after 1973, when private interests began taking over public goods[13] along with the cultivation of cheap labor pools in dependent countries, such as those along the U.S.-Mexico border. Labor-intensive jobs outsourced to countries like Mexico do not generate backward linkages in local economies, technological/production advances, or improvements in workers' quality of life.[14] In Mexico, Adrián Sotelo characterizes this process as deindustrialization, which was marked by the end of import-substitution politics along with the state's loss of negotiating power vis-à-vis capital in its attempts to reduce unemployment and increase exports (i.e., improve its balance of payments).[15] Deindustrialization is also coupled with a process of the financialization of capital that makes foreign investments, technology, and knowledge highly volatile and easily transferable out of one dependent country into other dependent or metropolitan ones.[16]

This is evident in the maquiladora complex along the Mexico-U.S. border, where plentiful jobs and promises of industrialization provide foreign capital a reproducing pool

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[12] Adrián Sotelo Valencia, *El mundo del trabajo en tensión: Flexibilidad laboral y fractura social en la década de 2000* (México D.F.: Plaza y Valdez, 2007), 225.
[13] David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 172.
[14] Patricia Arias, Luisa Gabayet and Rocío Guadarrama, "El desarrollo maquilador en México: la difícil transición entre lo tradicional y lo moderno," in *Globalizacion, trabajo y maquilas,* ed. María Eugenia de la O and Cirila Quintero, (México, D.F.: Plaza y Valdez, 2001), 409.
[15] Idem., 406-407.
[16] Adrián Sotelo Valencia, *Desindustrialización y crisis del neoliberalismo: Maquiladoras y telecomunicaciones* (México D.F.: Plaza y Valdez, 2004), 156-9.

of cheap labor. These "reserve armies" are heterogeneous and marginal, making a consolidated class struggle difficult without a unifying factor, such as identity.[17] Even within same localities and maquiladora plants, the individualization and a multiplicity of identities, political frames, and objectives undermine long-term and coherent struggles. Neoliberal policies (i.e. privatization, re-structuralization, labor reform, reorientation of investments away from productive industries and into finance) affect the cultural patterns of production, knowledge, and morality evident in processes of individualization that promote social fragmentation. Social fracture decreases social communication and conflict, promoting the alienation among groups and individuals that see others as fundamentally different and thus as threats.[18] As a result, social fracture reinforces passivity and uncritical stances that diffuse confusion regarding collective interests and the state of social affairs.[19]

Alejandro Lugo has a similar explanation for the lack of mobilization in the U.S.-Mexican border rooted in the heterogeneity of social classifications that Anibal Quijano posits helps capitalists maintain control of power.[20] Lugo argues that Mexico's colonized society is the product of an uneven combination of the Iberian and American empires that are clearly manifested in the border region. He recognizes the mobilization potential of maquiladora workers despite government repression; nonetheless, class mobilization has been unmade culturally, economically, and politically through the various complex phases of workers' identities, including gender, class, and color hierarchies that are used to discriminate through what Lugo calls "border inspections." These inspections occur

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[17] David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, 175.
[18] Manuel Castells, *La era de la información: Economía, sociedad y cultura (vol.1)* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1997), 29-30.
[19] Adrián Sotelo Valencia, *El mundo del trabajo en tensión*, 233-240.
[20] Aníbal Quijano, "Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social," *Journal of World Systems Research* 11(2000), 372.

within members of the same social class, debilitating a collective identity that can lead to mobilization. Lugo's explanation, then, points to colonial formations of power that disarticulate collective identities and the potential for mobilization.[21]

Thus, geopolitical forces effecting deindustrialization also have the ability to transform social relations. The neoliberal attack on collectivities, such as labor unions, promotes and exploits the heterogeneous composition of Mexican and Chihuahuan society through cultural discourses of individualism, competitiveness, and labor effectiveness. Some of these tools used to fragment societies have been employed all along, according to Lugo, but now, the end of the welfare state in Mexico removes whatever resources were available before. The social guarantees of the import substation industrialization and corporatist model have been gradually eroded with the penetration of international capital and a new labor culture. The state has ceded power to transnational companies when setting the terms of economic arrangements, leading to a situation of deregulation of labor relations.

**PRODUCTION CHANGES**

This review of cultural changes argues that geopolitical power dynamics feed cultural patters that discourage organization through discourses of individualism and social heterogeneity. However, one could argue that the restructuralization of Mexico's industrial sector, and particularly the implementation of the maquiladora model, introduces technology and labor organization systems that undermine collective identities. Jean Cohen (1985) indicates that establishing such an identity is difficult because it is unclear when and why individuals recognize mutual characteristics and more

[21] Alejandro Lugo, *Fragmented Lives, Assembled Parts: Culture, Capitalism and Conquest at the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Austin: Univeristy of Texas Press, 2008), 3.

importantly, arrive at states of consciousness and solidarity. The mechanisms under which a collective identity would arise in maquiladora plants would have to involve a political strategy with concrete objectives in mind under a specific context and following (historical) experiences of conflict.[22] These requirements are difficult to fulfill in a new working class that is continually being recycled and is replete with immigrants.

In a context of political and economic neoliberlization in Mexico, production restructuralization has focused on the specialization of intensive labor schemes, more so than the introduction of high-end technology that would more clearly encourage individualization and hence, a lack of collective identity.[23] Therefore, the introduction of technology was not the culprit of the absence of mobilization, but rather, a flexibilization of labor-intensive production that has taken place since the 1980s. The implementation of NAFTA intensifies the trend of changing production schemes, leading to Mexico's Federal Labor Law reform in December 2012 and the promotion of a new non-conflictive labor culture.

Before restructuralization, manufacturing plants in Mexico operated under Taylorist and Fordist schemes that separated the conception of production processes and its execution, with strictly regimented and managed task for workers. Maquiladoras followed a similar dynamic between 1965 and 1981, particularly in electronics assemblage and garment confection plants requiring no technical skills and providing comparatively low wages. The new flexible scheme allows more participation from workers in the production process.[24] This means a higher level of self-regulation (quality

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[22] Aníbal Quijano, "Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social," *Journal of World Systems Research* 11 (2000): 370.

[23] Enrique de la Garza Toledo, *Restructuración productiva, empresas y trabajadores en México* (México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006), 12-13.

[24] Jorge Carrillo and A. Hualde, "Maquiladoras de tercera generación, el caso de Delphi-GM" in *Comercio Exterior* 47 (1997).

control) and a more effective use of labor, resources, and materials.[25] This change in the arrangement of production processes is accompanied with a long list of formal and informal institutional transformations to national laws shaped by political, social, and economic pacts stemming from the Constitution of 1917 and state-labor pacts of the 1950s.[26] Flexibilization has been taking place since the 1980s, but was constitutionally institutionalized in 2012.

As suggested above, flexibilization is a process that not only involves the organization of labor, but the legal frameworks under which the new organization takes place. The mechanisms for flexibilization can be summarized as: a) numerical flexibility, referring to flexible workforce adaptable to production and market needs; b) flexibility in the use of the workforce (i.e., functional, multi-task assignments); and c) wage flexibility, denoting unstable work shifts and salaries dependent on productivity and market demand.[27]

The flexibilization of labor relations and its consequent deregularization began with the reduction of labor union numbers, members, and political power when designing new economic and labor policies. Various types of in-kind bonuses/benefits compensated anti-inflationary wage reductions accorded in state-business-labor union pacts that replaced Revolutionary state-societal relations shaped by the PRI.[28] The new model rescinded the traditional conflict between businesses and labor unions and was replaced by collaboration among production actors to increase competitiveness in the face of

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[25] Enrique de la Garza, *Restructuración productiva, empresas y trabajadores en México*, 35.
[26] Kevin Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the state, and authoritarianism in Mexico* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 154.
[27] Enrique de la Garza, *Restructuración productiva, empresas y trabajadores en México*, 158-9.
[28] Acuerdo Nacional para la Elevación de la Productividad y la Calidad.

economic stagnation and market liberalization.[29] The new tripartite competitiveness pacts led to reduced work shifts as well as full-time employment opportunities in manufacturing plants, with a concomitant decline in wages and job assignment rigidity.

However, Enrique de la Garza has found that flexibilization schemes have not been fully implemented in Mexico's manufacturing sector. He shows that workers' involvement in the production process is low in most manufacturing establishments. De la Garza also found low levels of tripartite negotiations among workers, labor unions, and employers in decisions concerning all three kinds of flexibilization. Underlying this incomplete flexibilization of manufacturing, then, is an arbitrary "pre-Taylorist" model of (unscientific) functional flexibility that pervades employment contracts and maintains informal organizational schemes.

Specifically in the case of maquiladoras, informal labor relations are prevalent in the various border states. The "testing period" ranging from one to three months imposed on new hires before receiving permanent status illustrates an arbitrary form of numerical flexibilization.[30] This practice has many purposes. It gives the employer time to see if the worker is suitable for the position. It also allows the employer to extract labor from workers with the freedom to fire them at the end of the testing period without severance pay and other benefits. Another structural characteristic analyzed by Carrillo is mobility within plants. Current employees only fill 35 percent of new positions suggesting that within plant professional careers are not common in the industry. Carrillo also found that plants with collective contracts (labor unions) do not represent higher internal mobility;

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[29] Armando Rendón Corona, *Sindicalismo corporativo: La crisis terminal*, (México D.F.: Porrúa, 2005), 100.

[30] Jorge Carrillo and Jorge Santibáñez, "Sección Cuarta. Calidad en el Empleo" in *Condiciones de empleo y capacitación en las maquiladoras de exportación en México* ((Tijuana: Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 1993), 162.

ironically, lower wages are found among these same maquiladoras.[31] These problems translate into the industry's reputedly high turnover rates. Carrillo shows that in 1987 more than half of Ciudad Juarez's maquiladoras had a turnover rate of 11 percent, equivalent to replacing all plant positions in one year.[32] High turnover rates, then, undermine competitiveness because job-related knowledge and abilities are continually lost. Any chance of solidarity building in plants is minimal under these conditions.[33]

Another revealing point in Carrillo's study is the lack of general regulations and standardization regarding workload and management practices. Labor unions are not involved in the production decisions, providing transnational companies and their managers' great flexibility in the organization of the workspace.[34] Barajas Escamilla also found informality in relations across the trans-border actors. Even after more than forty years of implementation, there is still no coherent development model with clear protocols for relations among transnational actors, the three levels of the Mexican government, and international organizations. This informality has prevented a technological evolution in the industrial border complex. In addition, skills and salaries remain low because of scant educational opportunities and regional policy emphasis on promoting technical/vocational secondary education meant to supply the manufacturing and service sectors.[35] At the same time, wage ceilings control inflation for the sake of

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[31] Idem., 172.
[32] Idem., 95.
[33] Jorge Carrillo and Jorge Santibáñez, *Rotación de personal en las maquiladoras* (Tijuana: Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión Social, Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Plaza Y Valdez Editores, 2001), 13.
[34] Baird and McCaughan, *Beyond the Border*, 170.
[35] "Historia de la educación tecnológica en México," Secretaria de Educación Pública, accesed on September 29, 2013, http://www.dgeti.sep.gob.mx/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=64:historiadgeti&catid=81:catinstitucion&Itemid=477.

competitiveness in the international market,[36] creating a system that produces and sustains cheap labor.

Along with the informal operation and managerial practices, the maquiladora industry itself is heterogeneous. Jorge Carrillo has broken the industry into four generations based on the use of technology, decision-making processes, and research and development activities.[37] Although criticized because nearly all maquiladoras fall into the first two generations (1965-1981 and 1982-1994) that employ Fordism and flexibilization, his main point with the categorization is the heterogeneity of the maquiladora industry, even within same categories--a valid point.

Another important point coming from this line of research is the wage disparities found in the maquiladora industry. Flor Brown and Lila Domínguez found that even though women participation in maquiladoras reach just above 50 percent, they are vertically segregated in positions that pay less compared to men.[38] As a result, women are more vulnerable than men to lower wages and occupational loss in times of economic crisis.[39]

The unfinished flexibilization process in maquiladora production process suggests the consolidation of deregularized labor relations in maquiladoras. Deregularization undermines the productivity, human capital accumulation, autochthonous industrial networks, and improvements in work conditions for the sake of continued labor-intensive

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[36] María del Roció Barajas, "Los cambios en el proceso de relocalización industrial en la industria maquiladora de exportación," in *Cuatro décadas del modelo maquiladora en el norte de México*, eds. María del Roció Barajas et al. (Tijuana: Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2009), 73-4.

[37] Jorge Carrillo, "¿Cómo interpretar el modelo de maquila? Cuatro décadas de debate" in *Cuatro décadas del modelo maquiladora en el norte de México*, eds. Maria del Rosio Barajas et al. (Tijuana: Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2009), 81-108.

[38] Flor Brown and Lilia Domínguez, "Determinantes de las diferencias salariales de genero en la industria maquiladora: Una primera aproximación," in *Cuatro décadas del modelo maquiladora en el norte de México*, eds. Maria del Rosio Barajas et al. (Tijuana: Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2009), 262.

[39] María Eugenia de la O Martínez, "La industria maquiladora en México, 2000-2004," in *La situación del trabajo en México, 2006* (México: Plaza y Valdez, 2006), 247-248.

industrial corridors along the border that reduce unemployment, increase exports, and provide significant profits to multinational companies. Deregulation also promotes high turnover rates that recycles unskilled labor and reduces companies' legal responsibilities to their (former) employees. As a result, maquiladora workers cannot build collective identities, let alone with others in the sector, because there is a lack of prolonged employment, history of conflict, and clear objectives among workers. The fluidity of maquiladora workers in the sector and their deregularized relations with employers produces a system of legal and social ambiguity also prevents the formation of organizations that look after workers' rights because basic questions such as to whom to direct grievances are difficult to answer in this globalized setting.

**COOPTED LABOR UNIONS**

The few maquiladoras with CTM labor unions collaborated with transnational companies while competitiveness imperatives in local government arbitration bodies weakened their political strength. Cooptation and neutralization can be analyzed with resource mobilization theory, which emphasizes the need of resources, entrepreneurship, and preexisting organizations and networks to form social movements.[40] In Chihuahua, the few institutional resources and political opportunities available for labor organization in maquiladoras were eliminated with the crisis of corporatist labor unionism in Mexico after the economic crises of 1982 and 1987 and the new industrial-state pacts to increase competitiveness. Moreover, the flexibilization of collective contracts undermined a central negotiation resource for workers and allowed state and companies' arbitrary resolutions.

[40] John McCarthy and Meyer Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," in *The American Journal of Sociology* 82 (1977).

On the other hand, the maquiladora/industrial sector has accumulated resources and political opportunities in the midst of economic crisis. The industrial sector unified, organized, and demanded changes in labor relations to promote efficiency and competitiveness in production processes, i.e., to reduce costly labor conflicts. Crises have clearly expanded the political opportunities and strategic resources for the maquiladora sector as the state and local politicians seek unemployment reduction and greater exports.

Since the 1950s the disarticulation of protracted and long-term struggles have been credited to *charrismo*[41], bureaucratization of organization, scarcity of resources, and the substitutability of labor.[42] However, the demise of corporatist labor unionism began with the crisis of 1982 and the electoral reform in 1977 that gradually weakened the PRI and reduced CTM unions' political weight and influence, as manifested in lower rates of unionization[43] and fewer CTM legislators.[44] Both political and economic factors converged at this time, as the Mexican political system decentralized and ceded power to the private sector, neutralizing the democratic tendencies of maquiladora labor unions during 1965-1977.[45] Hence, the end of (in)formal corporatists structures translates into the further deregulation of state-business-labor union relations at the local level.

Deregulation gave way to the emergence of subordinated labor unions, which represent one of the main obstacles to labor resistance at the local level. These labor

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[41] Charrismo is a form of control over labor unions characterized by: a) use of state violence on workers to support union leadership; b) systemic use of violence; c) permanent violation of workers' labor rights; b) misuse and theft of labor union funds; e) dishonest dealings with workers' labor interests; f) corruption in all its forms; g) connivance among labor union leaders, the state, and capitalists. See, Raul Trejo Delarbe and Anibal Yanez, "The Mexican Labor Movement: 1917-1975," *Latin American Perspectives*, 3 (1976), 133-153.

[42] Devon Gerardo Peña, *Lucha Obrera en las Maquiladoras Fronterizas: Mexican Women and Class Struggles in the Border Industry Program*, (Austin,1980), 42-48.

[43] Armando Rendón Corona, *Sindicalismo corporativo*, 17

[44] Kevin Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution*.

[45] Dan La Botz, *Masks of Democracy: Labor Suppression in Mexico Today* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 182.

unions have succumbed to the mutually reinforcing interests of local politicians and businessmen by reducing labor-maquiladora conflicts, de-regularizing workspaces by neglecting collective contracts--as Carrillo has found--and using the *Junta Local de Conciliación y Arbitraje* (JLCA) to enforce the new state-industrial pact.[46] On the other hand, traditional labor unions, which focus on the improving salaries and benefits through collective contract negotiations, have concentrated in a few locations like Matamaros where unionization reaches 100 percent of plants.[47]

Sergio Sánchez Díaz describes the hybrid nature of maquiladora labor unions as multifaceted neo-corporatist unionism, characterized by traditional (i.e., defensive) and flexible actions with occasional improvements in working conditions through the provision of productivity and punctuality bonuses along with the expansion of benefits. As a result, unions demonstrate the capacity to meet industrial demands through flexible collective contracts that give managers and union chapter leaders significant power.[48] Additionally, they have proven to be functional with both PAN and PRI local governments in Chihuahua. This suggests the continued depoliticization of labor unions, and their transformation into human resource centers at the service of maquiladoras.

Protection contracts are another legal obstacle to labor organization as they enlist sometimes-unaware workers in subordinated labor unions, circumventing autonomous organizing efforts. Once workers are members of one of these labor unions allied with the employer, it is practically impossible to form another one. Díaz Sánchez describes large companies' use of protection contracts sold by the Chihuahua's Eduardo G. Olmedo

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[46] Cirila Quintero Ramirez, *Reestructuracion sindical en la frontera norte: El caso de la industria maquiladora* (Tijuana: COLEF, 1997), 231.
[47] Cirila Quintero, "La maquila en Matamoros: cambios y continuidades," in *Globalización, Trabajo y Maquilas, 89*.
[48] Sergio Sánchez Díaz, *Del nuevo sindicalismo maquilador en la ciudad de Chihuahua,* 300.

union, often bought when labor conflict emerged. The Olmedo labor union was even used by the CTM to block enlistments of competitor unions or federations in strategic industries.[49] Protection contracts are traded, inherited, rented, and sold as services to national and transnational businesses as if they were just paying a tax when establishing shop in Mexico.[50]

Another important component of the deregularization of labor is the employment of workers through intermediary companies that subcontract employees. Intermediary companies such as Manpower hire workers and absorb all employment responsibilities while employees work in maquiladoras. This results in legal ambiguities in labor conflicts because not one party, intermediaries or maquiladoras, responds to charges.[51] Subcontracting practices provide more evidence of deregularized employment practices that in this case confuse the identity of transnational employers, undermining the articulation of a targeted and effective social struggle, defensive or offensive.

Some autonomous organization has taken place in the four decades of the maquiladora model, but their institutional marginality and relative weakness have not represented significant victories for the labor movement.[52] Demands are mostly centered on increasing wages and improving working conditions, which fall under the rubric of traditional repertoires linked to the PRI; in cases where some demands were met, transnational companies and local governments have ensured the disarticulation of further organization by strengthening subordinated labor union chapter controls. The recreation of labor unions under the new pacts enforces flexibility through harmonious tripartite, yet

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[49] Idem., 122-124.
[50] Armando Rendón Corona, *Sindicalismo corporativo: La crisis terminal*, 48-9.
[51] Idem., 339.
[52] Cirila Quintero, "Cuarenta años de relaciones laborales," in *Cuatro décadas del modelo maquiladora en el norte de México*, eds. María del Rocío Barajas et al. (Tijuana: Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2009), 341.

unequal, relations.[53] The discourse of collaboration among local governments, transnational companies, and workers masks the legalization of labor unions that favor companies' economic wellbeing (i.e. profitability) over workers' interests.

Autonomous defensive struggles in maquiladoras also fail due to internal divisions among workers, mainly because the managerial sector is able to convince and coopt a fraction of workers using the industrial discourse implemented in the 1980s. Many workers express anti-labor union attitudes that vary among cities.[54] This phenomenon is perplexing given the decadent working conditions of maquiladora workers.[55]

The cooptation of labor unions and their operative failure to protect labor rights at the behest of multinational corporations and national economic growth is well documented throughout the twentieth century. With neoliberalization, however, the impetus is toward deregularization and the reduction of state intervention in labor relations. This process has reduced the scant resources and political opportunities for the few remaining labor unions, while strengthening the industrial/maquiladora sector push for flexibilization.

## EMOTIONAL HABITUS: AN ADDITIONAL TOOL FOR EXPLANATION

Geopolitical transformations and continuities' effects on labor culture, production changes, cooptation, and the deregulation of labor relations provide a variety of reasons for the lack of labor resistance in the maquiladora sector. Nonetheless, the explanations work as systems or structures imposed on the workers—production changes, labor

[53] Idem., 329.
[54] De La Botz, *Mask of Democracy*, 182.
[55] Cirila Quintero, "Cuarenta años de relaciones laborales," 338.

relation transformations, and cultural modifications—without analyzing workers' motivations, thoughts, and feelings regarding their political (in)action. In this respect, Deborah Gould offers a useful framework for analyzing the emotional habitus of individuals or collectivities in social movements and the emotional work involved in triggering different dispositions of action, whatever their type. This framework will be useful in expanding the dimensions of organization's invisibility, impossibility, or absence from a more personal and emotional point of view, which is often disregarded as irrational, but that is closely linked to many decisions, let alone political ones, we as humans make. Emotions, then, condition our possibilities for organization by facilitating or blocking our political horizons at a given moment.[5657]

Gould's analytic framework focuses on how an emotional habitus predisposes individuals to act, or not, in certain ways. Her framework rests on her definitions of affect and emotion. Affect is a "non-conscious and unnamed, but nevertheless registered, experience of bodily energy and intensity that arises in response to stimuli impinging on the body." Emotion, on the other hand, is what is registered as a result of those stimuli as an actualized or concretized coded cultural expression, through gestures or language. This expression of what one is feeling is structured by social conventions and systems of signification. However, individuals do not rationalize or "capture" all of the non-conscious bodily sensations that are affects and what is left over also becomes an important motivational force in individual and social life.[58]

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[56] Deborah Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 443.
[57] This approach is not based on a gender construction of emotional habitus; both males and females are strongly influenced by their emotional horizons in their decision-making processes.
[58] Idem., 22.

Emotions are helpful in explaining the lack of labor organization because they address the variety of contradictory, ambivalent, and complex affective states and feelings stemming from an individual's experiences. Emotions are also important sources of social reproduction (i.e., leaders, ideologies, hierarchies, normativity) and social change (i.e., things could/should be different) in social movements.[59] Studying emotions and affect also allows us to make sense of individuals' realities and how they face difficulties at work or in everyday life. A collectivity's shared feeling structure or systems of signification are an important tool for analyzing how affect can be molded into protest or passivity.

This shared system is what Gould calls *emotional habitus*, that is, a collective and "partly conscious emotional disposition" which can then influence political dispositions, or lack thereof in this case. Habitus is a practical sense of what is (im)possible in a specific context that "structures individual and collective practices" and is molded by a dialectical relationship between structure and practice, making and unmaking dispositions that in the social realm provide the "sense of the game".[60] Normativity analyzed in these terms is a powerful bodily sense of what we must do to in order to fit in, to be recognized, in addition to providing feelings of belongingness when following norms (in other words, the emotions and affect attached to these practical bodily senses). Applying habitus to the realm of emotions allows an analysis of the axiomatic emotional dispositions of a group's members as shaped by a social context and their position in it. As a result, marginalized groups' emotional habituses are shaped by the dominant culture and their experiences of oppression.

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[59] Idem., 26-7.
[60] Idem., 33.

In *Moving Politics*, Gould emphasizes the changing nature of emotional habitus due to her interest on the transformation of the gay community's ways of emoting and mobilizing amidst the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. However, this malleability could be more rigid in other contexts and prevent (positive or negative) social change.[61] In the case of Chihuahua's maquiladora workers, their emotional habitus immobilizes individuals and contributes to the maintenance of the status quo despite grievous affective states. This is because the emotional habitus employed to make sense of affects alters affects as they are being registered within the normative social codes of a given context. This is not to say that there is a correct way to register or read affect; that depends on each emotional habitus. Rather, my interest is in identifying how an emotional habitus can transform potential grievances into socially accepted and expected political passivity.

Social norms are ultimately linked to emotional power structures that influence how we make sense of our affects. Aside from helping us interpret affects, emotional habitus can become a vehicle for the reproduction of how to feel and thus when and how to act, which has important political implications. It works similarly with symbolic violence, as it reproduces what to the dominated subject seems to be a natural social construction, and thus reproduces it. Emotional habitus, then, provides flexible blueprints of socially constructed structures of emotions that can neutralize affective states of resistance or rebellion. When unregistered affective states are strong enough or unsatisfactorily read, they can reshape emotional habitus and thus enable new political horizons.

The framework of emotional habitus will be helpful for my purposes because it allows me to explore the political horizons of maquiladora workers. These horizons are

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[61] The idea that an emotional habitus can prevent mobilization is explored in Chapter One of *Moving Politics*.

deeply influenced by social norms, political institutions, and discourses native to Chihuahua and the border region. Hence, an exploration of these social and political contexts is crucial to understand how workers affective states shape their interpretation of social realities and why/how they decide not to organize and remain subjects of the current maquiladora model.

## WHAT WE CAN TAKE FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of the three different explanations for the absence of labor mobilization is important to keep in mind when moving forward and using Gould's framework. The literature illustrates the pervasiveness of deregulation in labor relations. In this thesis, I show how deregulation shapes the emotional habitus of maquiladora workers that stifles mobilization from its inception.

The review illustrates three theories that limit mobilization. First, geopolitical forces have reduced the post-revolutionary role of the state among important economic sectors in Mexico. Along with the loss of the state's negotiating power with transnational companies comes the deindustrialization of Mexico, which carries new cultural patterns giving birth to the new labor culture that seeks to reduce conflict in order to insert the country into competitive international markets. The new dictum is: the old conflictive labor culture is obsolete in the era of open markets. This has become the cultural tool of deregulation of labor relations that undermines mobilization.

Second, the new production schemes have flexibilized the labor relations established in Mexico's post-revolutionary regime. In addition to the heterogeneous nature of the maquiladora sector, arbitrary labor relations, high turnover rates, and threatening market vicissitudes, put workers in unstable situations that undermine the

articulation of collective identities based on concrete goals and historical experiences of conflict. Flexibilization, then, is the organizational tool of the deregulation of labor relations that undermines mobilization.

Third, the cooptation of labor unions along with their subordination to capital has led to more direct actions towards reducing mobilization. The sale of protection contracts and subcontracting schemes reproduce and multiply the ambiguity in maquiladora labor relations. They have become the practical tools of deregulating labor relations that undermine mobilization.

The importance of taking deregulation into consideration is because of the processes it continually sets off. It removes restrictions and regulations, but what is left? Another set of restrictions and regulations? The literature suggests that maquiladoras and the market's prerogative determine labor relations, and these are themselves constantly changing. This leads to a very unstable situation that makes it difficult to articulate mobilization based on the working class of maquiladoras. This is especially the case when workers cannot rely on regulations for their protection or for the articulation of a discourse founded in regulations or criticizing their lack of implementation. In other words, mobilization loses traction when it is not clear what workers are against because the point of reference does not exist or keeps changing.

# Chapter 3: Historical Background

This chapter reviews the history of the state of Chihuahua, with a special emphasis on the capital city, given that it is the focus of my study. This historical review of the state includes details on the formation of the social and economic space that is Chihuahua as well as the history of the maquiladora industry in Mexico and the state of Chihuahua. The wider history of the state reveals that Chihuahua's political history is marked by the fragmentation of political struggles and identities that have neutralized the once anti-authoritarian, autonomist, and anti-centrist political culture of the state. At the end of the chapter I discuss the implications of deregulation in the further disarticulation of identities and political struggles, which deal directly with the current absence of mobilization in the most important industrial sector of the state[62] and city of Chihuahua.

## WAR AND CONQUEST

The expeditions that led to the Spanish colonization of the state of Chihuahua were ultimately unsuccessful in their objective of finding mythical lost cities such as Cibola. Instead, Spaniards found plentiful land and water resources along with various indigenous groups without centralized political organization. The Spanish explorers soon found that the indigenous groups of the region were not submissive; indeed, they achieved the longest-lasting indigenous resistance on the continent. Indigenous groups were not strangers to conflict: the Tepehuanes from northern present-day Durango and southern Chihuahua cultivated an enmity with the Rarámuris, living in southwestern Chihuahua in the Sierra Madre.[63]

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[62] "Actividades Económicas" Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, accessed October 3, 2013, http://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/monografias/informacion/chih/economia/

[63] Luis Aboites, *Breve historia de Chihuahua* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994), 13-15.

As a result of the combative characteristic of indigenous groups, Spaniards encountered a lack of labor in the Chihuahuan frontier. Violent submission into servitude and labor-intensive work led to a constant state of war in the region that would mark political, social, economic relations until the end of the nineteenth century. One of the strongest reactions from indigenous groups took place in 1616, when more than one thousand Tepehuanes and three hundred Spaniards died in a confrontation that heavily marked the colonizers.[64] In 1648, 1650, and 1652 Rarámuri revolts shook Spaniard settlements attempting to increase their population in the frontier. Hence, the colonization experience in Chihuahua was replete with movements to both escape danger and resettle communities and missions.[65]

In addition to Spanish colonizers, Franciscan missionaries in the north-central part of the state and Jesuits in the Sierra Madre had an important role in the colonization process. Evangelical work came along with recruitment of indigenous groups, rendering round-ups and enslavement unnecessary. Franciscans and Jesuits instituted a type of *repartimiento*[66] and fulfilled the role of caciques that provided a stable workforce around missions. As a result, indigenous groups received protection against the Spaniard's violence they were exposed to in nomadic life.[67]

The discovery of silver veins in what is today Parral (1631) in southern Chihuahua was another important event in the political economic and demographic construction of the space now known as Chihuahua. With the discovery came an influx of

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[64] Idem., 26-28.
[65] Idem., 34-38.
[66] The *repartimiento* system traditionally consisted of indigenous caciques who recruited men from their communties to be exploited by the Spanish. In the case of misions in Chihuahua, Jesuits and Franciscans took on the role of caciques, not without resistance from indigenous groups. See, Luis Aboites, *Breve historia de Chihuahua* (Mexico, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994).
[67] Idem., 24-26.

commerce, Spanish colonizers, workers, administrators, an indigenous workforce—still enslaved or under *repartimeinto*. The governor of Nueva Vizcaya even changed the capital of the province from Durango to Parral. The concentration of wealth and population led to the centralization of lands and water resources, increasing agricultural production in the region and articulating a trade network extending from Santa Fé to Zacatecas. A vein discovery in Cusihuriachic led to another thrust northwards , putting pressure on indigenous groups in the area. The expansion of Spanish power in the region, droughts, epidemics, and rumors of an indigenous rebellion in New Mexico led to another cycle of violent clashes between Spaniards and native groups from 1680 until 1698, ending with a harsh suppression of the latter and the destruction of their crops.[68]

The discovery of the Santa Eulalia mine close to what today is the city of Chihuahua (San Francisco de Cuellar) led to its foundation on October 12, 1709, on the confluence of the Sacramento and Chuviscar rivers. By the mid- eighteen century, Chihuahua-Santa Eulalia boasted a population of 20,000 and important commercial ties with nearby communities such as El Paso and Santa Fe. Thus, the commercial networks established in this city integrated various regions into what is now the state of Chihuahua.[69] Nonetheless, the lack of labor force for the mines was still a problem and labor conflicts continued to exist.[70]

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, three important demographic transformations occurred in Chihuahua. First, war, epidemics and/or the violent incorporation into Spanish settlements extinguished the Conchos group in central

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[68] Idem., 32-44.
[69] Idem., 47-54.
[70] In 1730 a strike broke in the mine due to the cancelation of the *pepena*, a portion of minerals kept by workers to compensate low wages. See, Luis Aboites, *Breve historia de Chihuahua* (Mexico, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994), 54.

Chihuahua. Second, Rarámuris moved to the highland of the Sierra Madre once the expulsion of Spaniards became increasingly difficult. Third, Apaches from New Mexico and western Texas took the territory left by the Conchos and Rarámuris, adopting agriculture and horse riding.[71]

Expelled from the New Mexican plains by Comanches, Apaches moved into central Chihuahua in the 1730s, where they retook their nomadic lifestyle and adopted cattle hunting. They specialized in pillaging farms, stealing, and hunting cattle along the territory's trading routes, causing the evacuation of Spanish ranches and haciendas.[72] The Spanish and *criollos* were not able to eliminate the Apache threat because of the latter's nomadic lifestyle that lacked any sedentary structures of social, economic, political or religious reproduction. Additionally, their conception of territory was flexible and pillaging became a form of survival that would sometimes be tolerated by Spanish colonizers.[73]

Some control of the violence was finally established towards the end of the eighteenth century through various colonial arrangements. The Bourbonic Reforms (1760s) reduced political instability, extracted taxes, and attempted to assert the Crown's hegemonic rule over the colonies--especially in critical frontier territories like Nueva Vizcaya--through military territorial control, protection of commercial routes, and the promotion of economic development. The expulsion of Jesuit missionaries made indigenous communities more vulnerable to new waves of Spanish and criollo settlers who were given individual and communal lands in exchange for military service.[74]

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[71] Idem., 44ç
[72] Idem., 59-61.
[73] Víctor Orozco, "Las guerras indias en la historia de Chihuahua," in *Diez Ensayos sobre Chihuahua* (Chihuahua: Doble Hélice, 2003), 68-73.
[74] Idem., 66-67.

However, peace treaties and provision of rations to Apaches worked to significantly reduce violence in a paradoxical type of Spanish "tribute".[75] The period between 1810 and 1831 would be one of peace and growth[76] for Chihuahua despite the War of Independence taking place in central and southern Mexico.

After independence, the autonomy of the new Mexican states, growing population in the region, and the end of colonial political structures eventually led to more conflict between the new Mexicans and indigenous groups. Population growth in the United States that pushed Apache populations south and the end of Spanish-Apache pacts restarted waves of attacks and cattle theft that lasted from 1831 to 1886. Rationing ceased and the new imbalance in power relations gave Apaches relative advantage.[77] Additionally, northern states could not coordinate efforts to deal with Apaches, unlike colonial authorities that had maintained the same policies throughout the region and could manipulate conflicts between indigenous groups.[78] The weak central government of Mexico City could not provide the necessary support to Chihuahua's population, engendering resentment amongst northerners and calls for cessation that cultivated feelings of regionalism and anti-centrism towards the federal capital.[79]

Anti-centrist sentiments would become a key characteristic of Chihuahuan political culture. The *rancheros*, or small farmers, developed a strong identity founded on the war against Apaches and Comanches. Rancheros lived in farms, small towns, missions, and presidios working in agricultural production, cattle ranching and as soldiers

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[75] Víctor Orozco, "Las guerras indias en la historia de Chihuahua," 68-73.
[76] Between 1790 and 1823, the population north of Chihuahua increased by 177 percent, sustained by agricultural, cattle, and textile industries (Aboites 70).
[77] Idem., 77.
[78] Idem., 74-6.
[79] Idem., 79.

defending their ecological autonomy[80]. They were able to organize effectively against raiding groups of Apaches and maintain their social reproduction in the frontier against outside encroachments. This was an arduous effort given that these groups did not receive much assistance from Mexico's central government. However, they cultivated an alliance with big landowners, industrialists, and other powerful groups in Chihuahua, who were all united against the Apache threat. Ultimately, the expansion of Mexican and U.S. capital, along with the alliance of miners, ranchers, business people, and landowners, finally defeated the Apaches towards the end of the eighteenth century.[81]

The *ranchero* class forged in the war against the Apaches was one of the most significant elements of the Mexican forces defending the national territory against the U.S. invasion of 1846-1848. The Mexican military suffered important military defeats, the Battle of Sacramento above all, further fueling the anti-centrism of Chihuahuenses.[82] This sentiment was illustrated in the state's support for the liberal cause in the Reform War (1858-1860) due to Chihuahua's political and economic elite interest in the *desamortización* of ecclesiastical and indigenous lands. Rancheros, merchants, and professionals supported the liberal cause because it reduced privileges to the landowning class and provided access to land.[83]

After the Apache threat was eliminated at the end of the nineteenth century, the coalition of political forces would break down in Chihuahua. The landowning/business sector and the state government unified and consolidated forces in the expansion of

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[80] Ecological autonomy is a concept developed by John Tutino that describes the ability of rural communities in Mexico to be self-sufficient mainly thorugh agricultural production. This concept is developed in "The Revolutionary Capacity of Rural Communities: Ecological Autonomy and Its Demise" in *Cycles of Conflict, Centuries of Change: Crisis, Reform, and Revolution in Mexico*.

[81] Idem., 87-88.

[82] Idem., 82.

[83] Víctor Orozco, "Hitos de la historia chihuahuense," in *Diez Ensayos sobre Chihuahua* (Chihuahua: Doble Hélice, 2003), 217-218.

capital in the last third of the nineteenth century. Railroad and mining concessions along with rights to water and forest resources were granted to the industrial sector. President Porfirio Díaz also supported foreign investment, limiting local populations' control over Chihuahua's resources. The expansion of capital posed a serious threat to autonomous ranchero communities that suffered encroachments onto their lands and harsh working conditions at the hands of landowners. This antagonism became evidence with various strikes and rural revolts beginning in the 1880s that would spark the start of the Mexican Revolution in 1910.[84]

Ironically, after the Revolution, the pact between large landowners and the state government continued as illustrated in Governor Ignacio Enríquez's projects of economic development and redistribution of lands. Under these policies, landowners merely sold part of their properties, barely impacting the distribution of wealth or the social order. Mennonite communities from Canada took advantage of these policies and bought land from the Hacienda de Bustillos in 1922, where many reside to this day.[85]

Despite conservative policies, the formation of *ejidos* was comparatively high in Chihuahua, leading to a demographic shift towards rural areas and expectations of more redistribution. However, the conservatism of local politicians prevented extensive distribution, promoting parcelization to introduce ejidos to the market.[86] Despite protests from popular sectors, especially miners and small farmers, their grievances were not

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[84] Víctor Orozco, "Tradiciones guerreras y antiautoritarias," in *Diez Ensayos sobre Chihuahua* (Chihuahua: Doble Hélice, 2003), 181-196.
[85] Luis Aboites, *Breve historia de Chihuahua,* 145.
[86] John Tutino, "The Revolutionary capacity of rural communities," in *Cycles of Conflict, Centuries of Change: Crisis, Reform, and Revolution in Mexico* eds. Elisa Servin, Leticia Reina, and John Tutino (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 243.

unified in an effective manner. These struggles remained localized in specific work sites or ejidos.[87]

Not until Lázaro Cárdenas' administration (1934-1940) did the Revolution's tenants regain political power among workers and peasants through their incorporation into the state and party apparatus of the PRI. Cárdenas's strategy to pacify revolutionaries and gain hegemonic power for the PRI did not improve small farmer's lives due to the reform's limited extension and production insufficiency levels in ejidos. Meanwhile, the landowner and business sectors continued their expansion towards northern Chihuahua. By 1950, Ciudad Juárez would become the largest city in the state.[88]

With the consolidation of the PRI regime and the onset of Chihuahua's urbanization, rural and urban protest emerged in the 1960s. On September 23, 1965, the *Grupo Guerrillero Popular,* composed of rancheros and rural teachers, executed a failed armed assault on a military post in Madera, Chihuahua, demanding protection and redistribution of agricultural lands. Despite their defeat, land invasions continued until 1988. This socialist armed struggle would be transferred to the urban setting. In 1968 invasion of lands began in the northern part of Chihuahua city to form the Francisco Villa neighborhood from which the *Comite de Defensa Popular* (CDP) emerged. The CDP organized, coordinated, and united different urban sectors in Chihuahua's social struggles, gaining strength after the illegal execution of three bank robbers in 1972.[89]

Urbanization and its consequent social effects reflected government policies looking towards the industrialization of the state. The last great economic boom in Chihuahua involved the maquiladora industry, born out of the *Programa Nacional*

[87] Luis Aboites, *Breve historia de Chihuahua*, 143-7.
[88] Ibid., 162.
[89] Idem., 165-7.

*Fronterizo* that provided transnational companies cheap and abundant workforce agglutinated along the border after the Bracero Program's end. The majority of maquiladora would locate in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, and Delicias, giving way to important transformations in the industrial development of the state, including large numbers of industrial employees, technological advancements, and the incorporation of women into the workforce. This industrialization program generated even stronger links between the state's economy and the international market. The political implications of this link are clear in Chihuahua's 1980-1990s electoral politics. The economic crisis of 1982 had a significant impact on border economies and the PRI's nationalization of banks heavily hurt local businessmen. Economic losses, along with anti-centrist sentiments cultivated throughout the state's history led to *Acción Nacional* (PAN) state and local victories during these years.[90]

This review of history illustrates how identities and their social struggles have been marked by conflict against different opponents. During the colonial era settlers, merchants, miners, landowners, and businessmen united against the Apache (and other indigenous groups') threats, forming a sense of identity. After that threat was eliminated, conflict between rancheros and landowners emerged, realigning the state's identities and their political struggles. This conflict would continue throughout the twentieth century; however, urbanization shifted the axis of conflict against business/industrial sector towards the cities, where a growing working class continued social struggles historically linked to the rural ones.

Yet the urban social struggles of the 1970s did not translate into a combative unionism in maquiladoras. Many of the reasons involve the nature of production systems

[90] Idem., 169-71.

employed in maquiladoras as well as the economic context under which the sector grew and consolidated. The ecological autonomy of popular classes ceased to exist and thus the ability to wage long-lasting mobilizations ended. Above all, the deregulation of workspaces in plants neutralized the possibilities for mobilizations and disarticulated collective identities of the state. In the urban setting, directing grievances towards a particular enemy is difficult, unlike the colonial times when apaches or landowners provided clear targets.

In the next section I cover the emergence of the maquiladora industry in order to track how deregulation has impacted collective identities and contributed to an emotional habitus with insufficient political horizons for mobilization.

## MAQUILADORAS IN MEXICO

The creation of the *Progrma Nacional Fronterizo* (Pronaf) in 1961 during Adolfo Lopez Mateos' presidency marked the beginning of industrialization efforts along the Mexico-United States border. Up to this point, both the northern and southern borders of Mexico had been neglected on many fronts, especially transportation and communication infrastructures. Pronaf's developmental objective was to increase economic production along the borders while improving the cultural and functional character of border cities to attract commerce and tourism. In this sense, the borders would decrease dependence on foreign goods, increase integration to the national economy, help reduce the balance of payments, and improve social well-being. The program resulted in the construction of major roads, paving, hotels, commercial centers, and museums.[91]

[91] Wilebaldo L. Martínez Toyes, "Programa Nacional Fronterizo (en el caso de Ciudad Juárez)" accessed October 13, 2013, http://docentes2.uacj.mx/rquinter/cronicas/pronaf.htm.

Following the momentum of Pronaf, President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz embarked on the *Programa de Industrialización Fronteriza* (PIF). Along with Pronaf's objectives, PIF sought to reduce poverty after the Bracero program[92] ended 1964, which left unemployment rates of up to 40-50 percent in border cities of northern Mexico. A lack of jobs and land combined with high unemployment rates generated unstable electoral and political conditions for the PRI, which lost at the polls in the 1968 local races in Baja California. These social and economic conditions also led to attacks to rural military outposts and the creation of the once independent *Central Campesina Independiente* (CCI).[93]

PIF's director, Antonio J. Bermúdez, put forward a plan to increase investment, credit, and subsidies to develop the border region. Bermúdez hired the U.S. consulting firm Arthur D. Little to come up with a viable solution to the rapid increase in population and poverty along the border. The consulting firm concluded that manufacturing facilities along the border that paid low wages and taxes and were waived customs duties for semi-processed materials would generate new sources of employment, higher quality of life, and increase commerce with the United States. For the Unites States, this offered an opportunity to address the profit crises that had been affecting the economy.[94] This is how the concept of "twin plants" emerged, an industrial arrangement in which capital intensive plants would be installed on the U.S. side of the border and labor intensive ones on the Mexican side in order exploit the comparative advantages of each country.[95] Plants

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[92] The *Acuerdo Internacional de Trabajadores Migratorios* was an agreement between Mexico and the United States that allowed the temporal migration of Mexican labor to work in the agricultural industry in the United States.
[93] Baird and McCaughan, *Beyond the Border*, 130.
[94] Ibid.,131.
[95] Guadalupe Santiago Quijada, "La industria maquiladora de Ciudad Juárez," accessed October 17, 2013, http://docentes2.uacj.mx/rquinter/cronicas/maquilas.htm#_ftn4

were set up in industrial parks, where maquiladoras received cheap rents, low electric and water rates, and transportation facilities; customs inspections were often conducted in the plants themselves to save time and money.[96]

The key governmental element in the operation of PIF involved the reduction of restrictions in the Mexican customs code though the *Decreto para el Fomento de la Industria Manufacturera, Maquiladora y de Servicios de Exportación* (2006). This deregularization of trade involved the tax-free importation of machinery, equipment, additional parts, and raw materials for their assemblage or other value-adding operations in Mexico. The export of these processed or assembled parts would not be taxed. In exchange, transnational companies would have to comply with Mexican laws, specifically the Social Security and Federal Labor laws. Foreign investors, however, ignored or interpreted these laws according to their interests. With few effective labor unions in the new sector, workers were left unprotected. When an 1974 economic crisis lead to maquiladora closures, Mexican government officials recognized and accepted the need to reduce personnel, implicitly accepting U.S. economic cycles as the term-setting mechanism for maquiladora employment, not the Federal Labor Law.[97]

In the 1970s, President Luis Echeverría continued and expanded support of maquiladoras, making them the main state development strategy for the border. He envisioned maquiladoras not only as a source of income for local populations but also for migrants hoping to work in the United States. Business and government officials also supported the sector's industrializing role along the border as the source for cultivating nationalist and patriotic sentiments in the region.[98] Support for the model continued in the

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[96] Baird and McCaughan, *Beyond the Border*, 134.
[97] Cirila Quintero Ramírez, "Cuarenta años de relaciones laborales en la maquila," 321.
[98] Idem., 319-20.

José López Portillo administration with the *Alianza para la Producción,* which had the objectives of increasing employment, exports, and investments.[99]

Given the interconnected nature of the maquiladora industry with the U.S. economy, any crisis on either side of the border had detrimental effects both. This was the case in the early 1970s and 1980s as the U.S. economy faced overproduction and reduced demand of Mexican products. The economic recession starting in 1973 brought about maquiladora closings, temporary or permanent reductions in personnel and hours, or both. This crisis encouraged the Mexican government to grant even more generous terms and authorizations to maquiladoras, such as unlimited investment rates, waivers regarding the rights to operate heavy machinery, and the import deregulation of raw materials destined for re-exportation. These policies correspond to the transition away from "stabilizing development", which used surplus from agricultural production to finance a growing but unproductive national industrial sector.[100] The protection and subsidies that Mexican industrialists received was part of the bigger model of Import Substitution Industrialization, or ISI.[101]

During this period, labor relations in the maquiladora industry began to show favoritism toward the transnational companies. The most significant labor conflicts involved noncompliance with federal regulations regarding plant closures and terminations. The local governmental arbitrary tribunals (*Juntas Locales de Conciliación y Arbitraje)* in charge of dealing with these conflicts usually ruled in favor of the companies or took long enough in ruling that workers abandoned their lawsuit against

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[99] Baird and McCaughan, *Beyond the Border*, 146.
[100] Jesús Miguel López, "La devaluación perpetua," *Nexos*, accessed October 22, 2013, http://www.nexos.com.mx/?P=leerarticulo&Article=266481
[101] Carlos Tello, "Notas sobre el desarrollo estabilizador," *Economía Informa* 364 (2010), http://www.economia.unam.mx/publicaciones/econinforma/pdfs/364/09carlostello.pdf

plants. Additionally, weak labor unions blocked efforts to sue or mobilize against closures, terminations, or bad working conditions.[102] This collusion against workers' interests was possible with the tacit deregulation of the Federal Labor Law.

The maquiladora sector began to grow again after the crisis of 1974, leading to the employment of 5,300 workers in the city of Chihuahua by 1980. However, overproduction in the early 1980s led to another cyclical crisis for the maquiladora industry, triggering similar adaptation measures involving closures and reductions in personnel and/or work hours (both temporary and permanent). This crisis in the industry became embedded in Mexico's 1982 debt crisis, linked to insufficient resources from the oil industry to service development projects, causing capital flight. Henceforth, Mexico's economic policy would dramatically change in order to make foreign investment more attractive, just as in the end of the 1974 crisis. The peso devaluation of 75 percent against the U.S. dollar reduced labor, investment, and operation costs, leading to a re-structuralization and consolidation of the industrial model.[103] By 1984, big companies, such as Ford Motor Company, were establishing plants in the city of Chihuahua. From this point on, the maquiladora industry would take off dramatically, significantly increasing employment in the region.

After the crisis of 1982 and before the one in 1994, labor relations in maquiladoras were characterized by the flexibilization of collective contracts and further deregulations for employees. The emergence of subordinated labor unions was permitted by local arbitration tribunals, resulting in reductions of benefits for workers. Additionally, the "new labor culture" favoring dialogue and cooperation along with companies'

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[102] Cirila Quintero Ramírez, "Cuarenta años de relaciones laborales en la maquila," 322-6.
[103] Jesús Miguel López, "La devaluación perpetua," *Nexos* http://www.nexos.com.mx/?P=leerarticulo&Article=266481

concern for their corporate family illustrated a discourse that attempted to portray labor unions as unnecessary and even obstructive to production effectiveness. These cultural shifts revealed that employment, wages, and benefits depended on factors such as the international economy and productivity levels that could not be regulated.[104]

This overview of the maquiladora industry's development and of some aspects of labor relations in the sector show how the industrialization program failed to integrate the border regions into the national economy, but instead ceded control over the economic growth in the region to transnational companies and the international market. The maquiladora's industry is highly sensitive to economic recessions in both Mexico and the United States, endangering the employment of workers. State efforts to reduce unemployment and balance of payment gaps along with transnational quest for profits have worked out in a mutually beneficial arrangement at the expense of workers. The operating mechanism allowing this collusion was the deregulation of economic and legal institutions. Deregulation is evident in the liberalization of the border economy, flexibilization of custom codes, and violations of the Federal Labor Law.

This discussion has also shown how the construction of Chihuahuan identities has been forged by (violent) conflicts against common enemies. The situation in Chihuahua today is not much different than it was in the 1900s. A large portion of the population, many of them poor or part of the lower middle class, works for or are affected by local and transnational capital. However, this rural and urban working class has been divided into many occupations, their social reproduction depending on various factors in each case, making it difficult to articulate a mobilization for or against *something*. In other words, unified mobilization based on heterogeneous interests seems hard to accomplish

[104] Cirila Quintero Ramírez, "Cuarenta años de relaciones laborales en la maquila," 326-34.

in the Chihuahua case. Maquiladora workers alone are exposed to authority patterns from various fronts: the international market, company headquarters, plant managers, and labor unions. How can one mobilize against any (or all) of these fronts if they impose both interrelated and yet separate working regimes? The next section covers Chihuahuan maquiladoras specifically to provide a deeper context.

## MAQUILADORAS IN CHIHUAHUA CITY

Plants in Chihuahua are known as second generation maquiladoras because of their combined traditional industrial models and new manufacturing techniques that incorporate new production and quality philosophies. The plants are characterized by more technical components of capital, automation, increased assemblage of electronics and auto parts, higher participation of male employees, and the flexibilization of production and work.[105]

The first maquiladora in Chihuahua city was established in 1975 in the Parque de las Americas, which would be one of the main industrial parks in the city. By 1980 there were fifteen plants providing roughly 5,300 jobs. With this growth, the local government created new industrial parks in nearby ejidos.[106] A 1981 study estimated that maquiladoras in the city of Chihuahua provided 4,651 jobs.[107] In 1985, just over 10,000 workers were employed in 33 plants in the city of Chihuahua. By the end of the 1980s, 60 plants provided roughly 31,000 jobs. Employment in maquiladoras increased to 31,793 in a total of 62 maquiladoras by 1992.[108] The latest figures from INEGI indicate that as of

[105] Jorge Carrillo, *Condiciones de empleo y capacitación*, 11.
[106] "La industria maquiladora de Ciudad Juárez" accessed October 17, 2013, http://docentes2.uacj.mx/rquinter/cronicas/maquilas.htm#_ftn4
[107] Sergio Sánchez Díaz, *Del nuevo sindicalismo maquilador en la ciudad de Chihuahua*, 91.
[108] Of these workers, 72.6 percent were female and 27.4 percent male. However, in the last twenty years, the rates of male workers in maquiladora has increased to just below fifty percent.

June 2013, there were 100 maquiladoras in the municipality of Chihuahua, providing jobs for 64,990 people.[109]

The growth of the maquiladora industry in Chihuahua City has not been linear. Due to the close relationship between the maquiladora industry and the U.S./global economy, any recessions in the latter translate to reductions in plants and working hours for Chihuahua's maquiladora's industries. With the onset of the 2007-2009 financial crisis in the United States, for example, 116, 000 jobs were lost in the state of Chihuahua by May of 2009, while 40,000 workers were in *paro técnico*, or the reduction of working hours due to diminished demand.[110] In the city of Chihuahua, about 15,000 jobs were lost by June of 2009. On the other hand, economic growth in the United States represents more and better-paid jobs in maquiladoras.[111] Needless to say, the same is true when economic crises emerge in Mexico. The cases of the 1976, 1982, and 1994 economic crises illustrate losses for the sector. However, the subsequent devaluation of the peso in each case, which reduces costs for transnational companies to operate in Mexico, increased the number of plants and employment opportunities.[112] This pattern indicates that the maquiladora industry recovers fast and even expands after economic crises, largely due to government efforts to recover through devaluations and other cost-saving measures for international investors.

It is important to consider where maquiladora workers are from in the case of Chihuahua City. Ninety-two percent of maquiladora employees in the 1980s were from

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[109] "Banco de información económica," Instituto nacional de estadística y geografía, accessed September 28, 2013, http://www.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/bie/

[110] Luis Carlos Cano, "Chihuahua pierde 116 mil empleos; exigen apoyos," in eluniversal.com.mx, May 19, 2009.

[111] Thomas Fullerton and Roberto Tinajero, "La industria maquiladora de exportación en Chihuahua," in *Chihuahua Hoy, 2006: Visiones de su historia, economía, política y cultura* ed. Víctor Orozco (Ciudad Juárez: Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, 2006), 161.

[112] Idem, 162-3.

the municipality of Chihuahua; by 1990, the rate decreased to 70.5 percent and it has probably continued to decrease in the last twenty years. Nonetheless, most of the workers in Chihuahua City continue to be from the state of Chihuahua. This indicates that most of the sources of labor outside the city of Chihuahua come from the rural communities of the state. Again, the heterogeneous nature of the maquiladora working class suggests that any mobilization by migrants and urban residents will be difficult. In addition, high turnover rates (reaching 14 percent per year in the 1980s and 1990s) indicates that maquiladora workers are constantly changing from one plant or job to another. This factor multiplies the heterogeneous nature of the Chihuahuan workforce.

Finally, the main branches of the sector in the city include the automobile and electronics industries. The unionism rates in the city in 1990 reached 70 percent of all employees of the maquiladora sector, which is particularly high compared to other parts of Mexico; however, unions were concentrated in only 20 of the 58 plants, which happened to be the biggest ones at the time. These figures demonstrate the important influence of labor unions, especially in the automobile industry, in establishing regimes of labor relations, either by promoting defensive mobilizations or by collaborating with transnational companies in the reduction of labor conflicts. The relative low number of strikes in the city suggests, then, that labor unions mainly work to reduce conflict.

This chapter has examined the formation and fragmentation of identities in the state of Chihuahua based on social and political conflicts, first mainly between Spanish decedents and Apaches and subsequently between landowners/business sectors and rancheros. Urbanization after the 1950s multiplied the identities emerging from the previous groups, making collective identities tenuous and short-lasting in the city of Chihuahua. The flexible and volatile nature of the industry along with strong governmental and cultural support for it, led to the deregulation of labor relations and

thus, of targeted forms of protest. These cultural, economic, and social transformations are key in the formation of workers' emotional habitus. The next chapter of my thesis explores the formation of these habitus through interviews of maquiladora workers.

## Chapter 4: Workers' Emotional Habitus

In this chapter I will analyze the point of view of maquiladora workers and one former union chapter leader working in the Chihuahua's City council. Interviewees' conceptualization of their work and time spent in and out of maquiladoras provides valuable insights into how they react to the difficult situations presented with their employment. I focused on labor relations, the production process, and their views about labor relations in maquiladoras. My major purpose was to trace the tools of deregulation identified in the first chapter--cultural, functional/production, and political—that work to reduce mobilization in Chihuahua. In sum, I found that these tools of deregulation at play in the world of the maquiladora, along with other labor spaces, help construct an emotional habitus that limits the political horizons of workers. They internalize and employ aspects of deregulation in their work lives that help them accomplish certain objectives. Specifically, through harsh working conditions in maquiladoras, workers achieve a status of "mature hard-working citizens". In other words, workers' subjugation and practice of cultural, functional, and political tools of deregulation helps construct their identity. The internalization and employment of these tools, then, helps maintain the maquiladora model for it allows the social reproduction of Chihuahuan working-class identity.

On the summer of 2012, I conducted ten extensive individual interviews of maquiladora workers and one former union chapter leader from the city of Chihuahua.[113] At the time of the interviews, the maquiladora workers were employed at the SMTC, Jabil, and Cessna plants of Chihuahua. The group of interviewees included seven males ranging form ages 19 to 49 and four females ranging from 27 to 41. The disproportionate

[113] All interviewees were provided pseudonyms.

number of males interviewed reflects the snowball sampling approach I used and thus a bias towards interviewing more metal workers in SMTC. In this sector of SMTC, most of the employees are males due to the gendered construction of this line of work. I was able to get in touch with workers through personal contacts in the City of Chihuahua who provided me with a list of potential interviewees. The workers who accepted to be interviewed had the opportunity to decide when and where they would like to talk with me. Four of the workers were interviewed in their homes, two in public parks, two at Chihuahua's downtown plaza, one outside a supermarket, and one at a mutual friend's house. The former union leader chapter was interviewed in her downtown office in Chihuahua City.

This chapter first introduces the interviewees through their views of work and what it has meant in their lives. The next section will allow the reader to identify the cultural tools of deregulation that have been used to establish the identity of maquiladora workers as hard working and mature. The third section analyzes the production process at various plants through interviewees' role in their perspective plants. The reader can identify how functional flexibility (or polyvalence) works to deregulate the workspace, but at the same time, allows workers to feel empowered and demonstrate their maturity. They fourth section reviews the politics of deregulation implemented in Chihuahua that are meant to reduce labor conflict. The absence of labor unions in most maquiladoras in Chihuahua City is symptomatic of the deregularization of industry in Mexico. The few labor unions left have been coopted by the companies or the state. This means that workers have one less (and historically powerful) political resource to mobilize. The evident defeat of the labor union in Chihuahua's maquiladora industry, then, removes this political possibility from the workers emotional habitus; their emotional interpretation of labor relations does not have labor unions as a vehicle to mobilize their grievances.

## CULTURAL TOOL

The reduction of labor conflict is an important element in Chihuahua's work culture that became evident in the interviews conducted. This regime of labor relations emerges in the way workers expressed their views about work in general and what it represented in their lives. Their views indicate that work is one of the most important aspects of life, requiring individual discipline and getting along with supervisors and coworkers.

Rodolfo, a thirty-six year old divorced welder living with his parents and working at SMTC[114], a Canadian "copy-exact" maquiladora in Chihuahua city focusing on metal sheet fabrications with interconnect capabilities, indicates that "work is a way of life" and that it must be done if one wants to eat. When he was young, Rodolfo lost one of his better previous jobs because he "did not appreciate his job…[and] lacked vision." By the time of the interview, Rodolfo showed interest in his specialty, but has been disappointed by the working environment in the plant. He criticizes his supervisor for causing conflicts among workers. Additionally, he thinks that evaluations are based on favoritism, rather than punctuality and effectiveness. The company's administrators do not care because the supervisor provides the results they demand. This allows us to see how labor relations are deregularized to meet production objectives. Rodolfo tolerates this environment because of the value he puts on having a job. He emphasizes the lack of work in Chihuahua, and the pressures to keep one's job when one starts at a new plant. This feeling of stress is also evident in his relationship with his ex-wife, who complained to him about lower-than-expected income during their marriage.

As an alternative, Rodolfo articulates a proposition to escape an unsatisfactory workplace. He believes that one must seek employment opportunities that coincide with

[114] Headquartered in Markham, Ontario.

one's taste, looking for improvement. Rodolfo demonstrated this view when he quit a better job, and expresses it again by indicating his desire to work in the United States, the United Kingdom, or Germany when I asked him about his future plans. This future does not include his family, coworkers, friends, or city. Rather, his alternative fragments many of his social links and individualizes his options to find recognition of his skills as a certified welder and higher pay elsewhere.

María, a twenty-seven year old mother of two children, has a more practical conception of work in the maquiladoras. She works at a Cessna[115] plant located in Chihuahua city assembling small airplane harnesses. She found employment after being unemployed after she was terminated from another maquiladora during the 2009 crisis. Because she lives with her partner, she did not experience financial difficulties. In fact, a key reason for working is that she wants to leave the house and do something constructive with her time, regardless of the tiring working conditions. Moreover, she considers her employment in the maquiladora temporary because she wants to complete her studies.

The work environment is basically tolerable, María indicates, because "you have to spend more time in the plant than in your house." Conflicts arise, she points out, mainly due to workers' unproductiveness and suspicions of supervisors' favoritism towards certain employees. However, María believes that those problems arise among those that are not sufficiently motivated in their tasks. This allows us to see an important aspect of the work culture in Chihuahua: labor conflicts arise among those who do not work hard enough, those who like to complain and point out favoritism. Favoritism, then, ends up being tolerated because there is no way to regulate it.

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[115] Headquartered in Wichita, Kansas.

José, a nineteen-year-old assembly line leader living with his parents and wife, has been working at Jabil Circuit[116] in Chihuahua for one year and finds the work exhausting, rewarding, and necessary to be able to eat and support his wife. Due to his great flexibility working at different stations, he quickly ascended to a position of authority supervising other workers, many of whom are older than he. José encounters a lot of resistance from older men who do not want to take orders from a younger person; however, these conflicts have decreased with time. Given his experience so far, José perceives that hard work has given him a sense of maturity and that the maquiladora can provide opportunities for personal growth as long as one invests enough effort. Unfortunately, he insists, the hard work involved in the maquiladora leads to exhaustion at the end of the day. José, along with many of his family members and neighbors, end up watching television with any free time they may have.

Natalia, María's sister, also works at the Cessna plant as an assembly line leader. Like many of the previous workers, Natalia finds that her work has helped her mature. She acknowledges that during her time as a line operator (assembler), she almost lost her job because she was only interested in the income and had no interest in the job. Whatever the source of employers' dissatisfaction with Natalia, they convinced her to change her work attitude. Now she admits that her work is "very interesting…[and] likes it a lot." Tellingly, the most significant problem she encounters at work is the negative attitudes of operators who do not work hard enough or barely follow her instructions. She indicates that she must "tolerate" these attitudes and usually ends up forwarding the problem to her supervisor. Her hard work ethic even translates to her political opinion;

[116] Headquartered in St. Petersburg, Florida.

she told me that it does not matter what political party is in power, people will "always use this as an excuse for not standing out."

Ricardo, a forty-nine year old married quality inspector with two daughters, also works at SMTC in the metals section, as does his wife Sarah. He mentions that it is difficult to live with one source of income these days, but that he is completely satisfied with his job and expects to work there for at least the next five years. For Ricardo, along with the majority of interviewed individuals, work means "everything." He thinks that his various jobs in maquiladoras have given him everything he has: family, house, and even luxuries. The working conditions and benefits have improved in the last years, he points out, and conflicts arise primarily because workers do not invest one hundred percent of their effort and might be fired as a result. Those who complain about the working conditions and the low pay are usually those who do not work hard enough, he says. "If one does nothing, nothing will fall from the sky. One has to work hard, to learn." As a result, Ricardo does not see problems at work, but rather, "challenges." Ricardo goes further by emphasizing that perhaps I had labeled maquiladoras as bad, when in fact they are sources of work and wellbeing for any citizen.

Sarah, Ricardo's wife who works at SMTC in the administrative and planning department, shares a similar work ethic of investing one hundred percent of one's efforts in their job. She feels identified with this sentiment because she overcame obstacles arising from her youth and her dysfunctional family. She describes her personality as a one of a fighter and someone who cannot stand still. Sarah only has a high school education, but she claims that she outperforms college-educated employees because of her devotion and experience. Sarah feels very proud of her achievements. Due to her difficult youth, she recognizes the problems associated with working in maquiladoras more than her husband, particularly the long working hours, lack of stable schedules, and

the low pay that some maquiladoras offer. However, Sarah points out that people who started as maquiladora operators (assemblers) have been able to achieve success in their careers, much like herself. Therefore, she recognizes that maquiladoras have helped her mature, learn many skills, and forge her fighting spirit.

Pablo, a forty-one year old father of three children from Culiacan, Sinaloa, works at SMTC and finds that the most difficult aspect of working in the maquiladora is the low wages. Pablo indicates that one just has to get used to the low pay. As a supplement to his low wage, Pablo sells seafood during the weekends and is constantly looking for additional shifts or jobs. His wife has her own business at home, but it is not sufficient now that his older children are staring high school and middle school. Nonetheless, he admits that his maquiladora jobs have given him everything he has: his family, house, and car. This demonstrates the conflicting opinion of maquiladora workers about their jobs that provide everything to the working class although the pay and conditions are not desirable. As an alternative way to feel about this ambivalence, work in the maquiladoras is interpreted as an initiation into the mature and hard working world.

Víctor, a forty-one year old divorced quality inspector who works at SMTC's metals department, has also identified the low pay in maquiladoras as the biggest difficulty he has experienced and has seen others experience. Víctor believes that maquiladoras do not take full advantage of workers' abilities and that explains turnovers. Additionally, the working schedules "consume a lot of time…too much time," and many times these fluctuate drastically depending on client's orders or complaints. Nonetheless, Víctor considers that work is mostly positive because it allows one to develop personally.

Otoniel, a twenty-five year old father who works as a communications administrator at Jabil, has a positive experience working in a maquiladora, despite negative opinions about maquiladoras at a younger age. He is happy that his training as

graphic designer and his job provide for his child's care as well as develop his economic and professional life. As a Jabil employee, Otoniel only complains about the commute to the plant. He admits, though, that he is only aware of the working conditions at Jabil, and that perhaps the environment elsewhere may not be as pleasant. He indicates that his relationships with coworkers and his supervisor are excellent. Of course, it is important to consider that his administrative position isolates him from much of the stressful work that José discussed.

Francisco, a twenty-one year old engineering student from rural Chihuahua who works as an operator at Cessna, has a very positive impression of work at maquiladoras. He began working from an early age, both on his family's ranch and in the city, where he has lived since he was fifteen years old. His wage is enough to cover his expenses and school and he has never had a conflict at work. He considers that his job at the maquiladora is an opportunity for personal growth and provides him the ability to help his parents out with living expenses, since he still lives with them.

**Analysis of responses**

The most salient pattern from workers' interviews is the low pay in maquiladoras along with the long working hours in their respective places of employment. The difficulties that these working conditions represent in workers' lives are assumed as a rite of passage into the adult and mature world. The best option for many workers is simply to tolerate some of the issues they find in their labor relations, as Rodolfo, María, and Natalia indicate in their interviews. The complaints that surface are administered through chains of commands that do not solve the root of the problems. The implementation of discipline and hard work, rather, is reinforced as the only option that can keep the plant producing and payments coming.

The cultural tool of tolerance and hard work is a useful and perhaps essential tool in the deregulation of labor relations. As a rite of passage into the adult and mature world, the culture of hard work is something to be proud of in basically any context. However, in the context of deteriorating working conditions in maquiladoras, this cultural tool disarms any inhibition to resist, complain, or mobilize. Above everything else is the fear of losing your job and complaining or resisting is definitely looked down upon in this context.

Mexico's federal government promotes the cultural tools for deregulation analyzed in this section. The Secretariat of Labor and Social Security promotes what it labels the "new labor culture of Mexico", defined as a "continuous process of harmonization of labor relations to secure the permanence and development of employment sources."[117] This objective is sought through competitiveness and by achieving high levels of productivity and quality. The process requires dialogue, coordination, pacts, and solidarity among all production sectors (i.e. workers, labor unions, businesses, and the government).[118]

Maquiladora workers' attitudes towards their work reflect the non-conflictive and highly productive labor culture that the Mexican government promotes in order to have a competitive edge in the global economy. The emotional habitus of workers shows a strong predisposition to be disciplined and to self-regulate their "immature" impulses. In this context, immaturity means breaking the new labor code and thus threatening the city's sources of employment. Most importantly, it means losing your job. Hence, maturely "tolerating" harsh or unfair working forges a predisposition to neglect the

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[117] "La nueva cultura laboral en México." Secretaría del Trabajo, Seguridad y Previsión Social, accessed November 2, 2013, http://www.stps.gob.mx/02_sub_trabajo/03_dgra/cult_lab.html

[118] "La Nueva Cultura Laboral en México," Secretaria de Trabajo, Seguridad y Previsión Social.

political possibility of mobilization. It also reinforces their identity as mature and hard-working adults.

## PRODUCTION TOOL

The production schemes of maquiladoras are tools that deregulate labor relations, neutralizing workers' mobilization. In this section I cover interviewees' descriptions and points of view regarding the production processes in maquiladoras. This personal view of the production processes helps to concretize the theoretical aspects of production processes in maquiladoras and to facilitate a discussion on how the political horizons of a Chihuahuan emotional habitus are being built through these working conditions.

The recruitment process for getting a job at a maquiladora follows a largely informal pattern. It consists of references from and by friends or previous coworkers as well as the more traditional manner of newspaper ads. Rodolfo, a welder working at SMTC, got his job through a reference he received from a friend and after passing a welding test. He also got his previous jobs through references, although many of these positions were on a temporary contract basis. Rodolfo had some difficulties gaining the trust of employers because according to the interviewer, his previous employer hired "people with very low levels of schooling and had bad reputations." María got the reference from her sister, Natalia, as mentioned above. An engineer Ricardo had worked with before invited him; his wife, Sarah, also began working at SMTC through a recommendation. Sarah indicates that maquiladoras prefer to hire through trustworthy personal recommendations because they do not want to waste time getting to know the workers and trying to determine if they are responsible. "Unfortunately," she indicates, "some college graduates turn out to be irresponsible." Otoniel got his job as a

communications administrator after receiving a tip from a friend who was leaving the position. On the other hand, José, Pablo, Víctor, and Francisco applied to maquiladora jobs by submitting an application or their resume after seeing a notice in newspapers or on internet job sites. These heterogeneous employment strategies, then, set the tone for the deregularized labor relations and positions of privilege inside the maquiladora.

In SMTC, which specializes in sheet metal fabrication, the production process mainly involves manipulating sheets of metal by bending, perforating, and welding them according to clients' specifications. The interviewees working on these metal sheets all had different functions in this process. Rodolfo makes perforations on computer shells and welds metal components on them. He indicates that the process varies constantly, given that SMTC's clients have different specifications for the metal sheets they make. Some pieces require a few seconds worth of welding, while others up to two hours. These pieces, according to Sarah, are then shipped to the client's hub, which at the time of my interviews was located in North Carolina. These orders need to be prepared and shipped on a moment's notice, indicates Sarah, and her job is to plan the production scheme in order to get the request delivered on time.

Rodolfo indicates that his position is highly flexible. Sometimes there is not a lot of welding tasks and managers move him to other areas where he can learn new processes. SMTC managers sent Ricardo to Boston to get training on new machinery. Upon his return, he performed as supervisor while operators learned how to use the new machinery since the quality control positions had not been developed yet. Víctor, who is assigned to the quality area, constantly has to move from one area of the plant to another, depending on what needs to be done. As auxiliary supervisor at Jabil, José has to fill in on any position that needs immediate attention as well as provide material for workers, give them permission to go to the restroom, and let them go to the cafeteria for lunch. At

the time of the interview, José was applying to be a technician, a position that employs the Japanese philosophy of *Kaizen*, or continuous improvement. This includes getting involved with many levels of the production level to troubleshoot issues and implement efficiency measures. María, who works for Cessna, assembles cable terminations, but recognizes that she can perform many jobs and use different tools in the maquiladora due to her experience working in other plants. However, the production processes at Cessna are always changing and María has to constantly check confusing manuals and verify everything with engineers.

The relationship with maquiladora engineers is another important part of the production process. Many times maquiladora engineers do not have a practical command of the production process because, as Ricardo notes, "they are just looking at numbers on paper, but truly, we are the ones who really have the experience with the machinery". He boasts: "many times engineers ask for my opinion because they know I have a good command of my work; much more than everyone else." María, on the other hand, faces conflicts with engineers because they demand strict adherence to instruction manuals that "are confusing" and "contradict themselves." As a result María and her coworkers have to write their own interpretations of the instructions on notepads to make it easier for them, even though engineers get upset with this practice; from their viewpoint, if any changes to the instructions are necessary, engineers should be the ones making them.

Quality control is another important component in the production process. Rodolfo indicates that many times the pressure to finish a piece translates into quality problems. On top of this, the high turnover rates among quality inspectors increases these errors. These errors continue even though after each step in the production process, the pieces are taken to quality inspectors in order to verify that everything has been done correctly. Ricardo, who is a quality inspector at SMTC, indicates that quality should

really be controlled at the individual level: "Everyone has a role in the quality [of the product]. Each person who touches the product has to do it correctly from the first time."

From these interviews, it is evident that the production process in maquiladoras is divided into many parts, individualized, and polyvalent. According to Victor, one of the main problems regarding the quality of SMTC products is that employees only focus on their part of the process without a holistic view of their work or of their objectives. "If everything comes out fine, things will be great for all of us; if things come out wrong, that is when the company starts to shake," he observes.

**Analysis of responses**

Víctor's observations reveal a concern regarding the soundness of the production process at SMTC. The individualization and polyvalence evident in the tasks described, however, would suggest that workers should have a good idea of the production process. In fact, the theory of functional flexibility emphasizes polyvalence as an asset to companies because it encourages initiatives from workers who "are the ones who really have the experience with the machinery" and can provide feedback to improve the production process. As we saw in the case of María, Cessna engineers do not always welcome the feedback on instructions that come from the hub plant in Wichita, Kansas. At Jabil, feedback is formalized through a suggestion box and an award for the best ideas. This illustrates that the benefits of functional flexibility are not being reaped at all the plants due to a lack of regulation in these feedback processes. More importantly, the incomplete implementation of flexible working environments in many manufacturing centers[119] can strain working relations and even the production process.

[119] Enrique de la Garza Toledo, *Restructuración productiva, empresas y trabajadores en México* (México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006), 136.

Functional flexibility also has the tendency to increase working hours and to deregularize tasks. The production models continually alter the end product of maquiladoras because their instructions depend on the client and the type of order made. Additionally, plants are always closing during economic crises. The application of the new labor culture in Mexico encourages the toleration of this model because it increases productivity and competitiveness. However, the reward system becomes individual in this toleration, not collective. The best employees get better positions, so values of productivity and competitiveness become internalized as ways to improve one's working condition--as a way to mature and become a hard-working adult. As a result, the identity of maquiladora workers revolves around maturity and hard work. Mobilizing against maquiladoras or the sources of employment would impede the reproduction of this identity.

Maquiladoras provide highly mobile atomistic working environments and the internalized work ethic of competitiveness reduces the chances of building a cohesive identity. Rather, it centers it around the individual development of employees, as individuals and as hard working. The emotional habitus built around these attitudes, then, promotes the creation of this identity, given their condition as maquiladora workers. Mobilization against the working conditions that are the foundation of "hard working mature" types of identities would prove that they are not these mature hard working laborers. Hence, the political horizon of maquiladora workers does not consider mobilization. On the contrary, the emotional habitus is built against mobilizations, which are viewed as counterproductive to workers' identities and their sense of worth.

**POLITICAL TOOL**

This last section of the interview part covers the role that labor unions play in labor relations in Chihuahua's maquiladoras. The majority of maquiladoras in the city of Chihuahua do not have labor union, which is the most important element demonstrating the lack of political resources in the mobilization of maquiladora workers. In addition, the majority of maquiladoras with labor unions are associated with the CTM, which has adopted the new labor culture policies that seek to reduce labor conflicts. This translates into a virtual elimination of strikes in the city of Chihuahua and the resolution of labor conflicts through *convenios* (conflict resolution agreements conducted outside of a trial). *Convenios* reduce the costs of trial, expedite the bureaucratic process of solving a labor conflict, and promote an attractive business environment for the city and state of Chihuahua.

The lack of political resources for the creation and mobilization of labor unions was evident in the First World Congress of Labor Law and Social Security hosted in Chihuahua city in October 2012. The four major themes of the panels were business ethics, labor culture of today and the future, labor unionism today, and labor and social security law for informal workers and migrants. One of the most debated issues during this congress was the right to strike, which was going to be modified in the draft of the new labor law approved in December of 2012. According to Hori Robaina of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, 30-day restrictions on strikes are an attempt against the historic victories of the working class. This restriction would seriously weaken the effectiveness of a historic negotiating tool for workers. According to María Teresa Guerra of the University of Coahuila, the right to strike has not been applied as an absolute right (i.e., as established in the Constitution). Additionally, Humberto Flores Salas from the Autonomous University of Chihuahua indicated that workers do not strike

or mobilize because they fear losing their jobs. According to him, this explains why only two strikes have broken out in the past thirty years.[120]

The ability of union chapter leaders to collaborate with the local PRI and CTM has definite advantages. Rebeca, a councilwoman in the 2010-2013 municipal government of Chihuahua city, worked in Cable Productos and rose to become the leader of the plant's labor union chapter. Her ascent was based on her ability to perform many duties in the plant and to get to know many workers whose support ultimately launched her into an unexpected election. Her good relations with the CTM leadership, and hence the local PRI, led to her position as a councilwoman. In my interview, Rebeca did not express political partisanship, but rather emphasized her hard-working attitude as a key determinant in her political career. More than an example of how hard work pays off or any accusation of corruption, Rebeca represents the values that the CTM and the PRI place on disciplined and efficient workers who do not obstruct their political agenda.

As might be expected with the limited number of unionized maquiladoras, none of the workers I interviewed was a member of a labor union. However, some had had limited experiences or heard from others about them. Rodolfo told me that SMTC only has a labor union in the non-metals, electronic assemblage part of the plant. This part of the plant is much older, and the new metals section was not added to SMTC's existing labor union. Sarah has heard that there are a few issues in this unionized electronics section of SMTC regarding cases of nepotism in the labor union leadership. However, she stresses, it is nothing like the extinct labor union at the Ford plant in Chihuahua City twenty or thirty years ago. According to Sarah, at that time the union chapter leaders would clearly receive bribes from company managers to end strikes and diminish

[120] "Mesa Panel sobre el tema de: 'La Huelga en la Cultura Laboral de Hoy y del Futuro,'" *Cultura laboral* 23 (2012), 16.

workers' demands, but "at this time, I doubt [these practices] continue…I do not think this society is that ignorant [anymore]. I would assume that if someone from the plant sees something, they would call attention to it." Sarah's views indicate two main assumptions of labor unions that are prevalent in Chihuahua: a) labor unions are corrupt and b) that such corruption would not be tolerated in the city.

On the other hand, José illustrates the point of view that labor unions are simply useless. He indicates the labor union in his previous maquiladora was not effective in solving complaints from workers. Concerning a conflict that José's friend had with the cafeteria, he said: "They just say that they are going to improve, that they will offer more [food variety]. 'We will offer our food, we will improve quality,' but these are only promises. And they do not change […]" He also pointed out that workers who did not participate in the May Day march did not get paid, even though it is a paid holiday by law. Complaining is futile, concludes José.

In *Del nuevo sindicalismo maquilador en la ciudad de Chihuahua*, Sergio Sánchez analyzes the labor relations in maquiladoras and their labor unions in great detail. He emphasizes Robert Michaels's "iron law of oligarchy" in characterizing the nature of power relations within labor union chapters. In particular, he focuses on this dynamic in the decision-making processes of labor unions during assemblies and the final negotiations between the labor union and the company, while leaving legitimate labor demands unattended. Additionally, Sánchez indicates that the "iron la of oligarchy" is applied in the development and culmination of two strikes in January of 1990 at the Essex 167-169 and 157-162 maquiladoras, which ultimately affected workers negatively.[121]

[121] Sergio Sánchez, *Del nuevo sindicalismo maquilador en la ciudad de Chihuahua*, 228-30.

The political resources to mobilize through Chihuahua city's labor unions are mined with obstacles that render most attempts impossible. Not only is Chihuahua's legal system adopting streamlining measures that reduce labor trials though agreements, but workers attitudes towards labor unions are negative. On the whole, labor unions are viewed as ineffectual, corrupt, and close-to extinct. The political opportunities that labor unions would theoretically provide for the struggling working classes does not exist in Chihuahua and there are many reasons to believe that workers were never were given the absolute control of official labor unions. As a result, the emotional habitus of workers is blocked to the ide of labor unions because they are considered to be bureaucratic bodies known for their ineffectiveness and corruption. In most cases, they could be easily substituted with human resource departments.

## THE EMOTIONAL HABITUS OF DEREGULATION

The interviews presented in this chapter provide many instances of how an emotional habitus is built on cultural, productive/functional, and political levels. These levels combine to generate and sustain a process of deregulation with the intent of improving the economic performance of the city of Chihuahua. Specifically, the culture of "maturity" and "hard work" is helping deregulate labor relations by encouraging workers to tolerate unfavorable or unsatisfactory working conditions. The deregulation of the workplace, then, predisposes workers with an emotional habitus that is not receptive to the idea of mobilization. The idea of mobilizing itself goes against their conception of being a good worker. Rather, the obstacles that workers come across are seen as challenges that one must overcome to succeed in their respective jobs and plants.

The functional flexibility model that implements polyvalence promotes and celebrates workers' ability to perform effectively in different areas. The success in being able to multi-task may come with the price of longer working hours and the absence of a collective identity due to the internalized and individualized competitive attitude of workers. This attitude is fueled by cultural conceptions of maturity. Hence, the deregulated production models allow individual workers to attain maturity through their polyvalence. In the constant application of competitive attitudes through polyvalence, an emotional habitus is constructed that predisposes workers to accept constant changes in the products they assemble, the supervisors they have, the plants they work in, and even the reasons for losing their jobs. Under the stress of this ambivalence and the lack of rigid sources to the problems they encounter in maquiladoras, the predisposition to mobilize is weak and limited. Resistance or grievances can be articulated against immediate problems, but these are constantly changing and sometimes provide rewards or benefits. Hence, the political horizon to mobilize in groups is limited. Perhaps individual or small collective forms of opposition against certain maquiladora practices can be generated (as in the case of María's self-made instructions), but the replaceablilty—another flexible element—of workers can make these efforts ineffective in changing working conditions. The replaceablilty of workers, then, is an element working alongside the emotional habitus of workers in preventing mobilization. However, the interviews reveal that workers are more concerned about losing their jobs due to performance levels, than conceptualizing their positions in maquiladoras as replaceable.

Finally, the deregulation of political organizations allows government control of union leadership, neutralizing any attempt to mobilize. The emotional habitus surrounding official labor unions has actually been constructed throughout the twentieth century and is reflected in a hard, negative view of these organizations. Labor unions are

considered instruments of corruption and any legitimate mobilization against the maquiladora model would be coopted by the government or the company. As a result, the political horizon of the few unionized workers in Chihuahua is limited to their individual professional careers. While advancing their careers, if the possibility to become a political agent emerges, it will be largely dependent on their ability to work hard without causing conflicts, as seen in the case of Rebeca.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

The constitution of maquiladora workers' emotional habitus has provided an alternative point of analysis explaining the absence of labor organization in Chihuahua City's maquiladora sector. Getting workers' perspectives on what work means for them

and how they experience labor relations in the industry revealed how they conceptualize the maquiladora model and their role in this economic sector. Their points of view reveal the strong influence of the new labor culture that emphasizes hard work, maturity, and their opposition to labor conflicts. The individualization of labor tasks resulting from flexibilization, then, leads to individual reward systems (including salaries) that compromise the quality of completed products, as Víctor indicated, and thus, the assurance that companies will continue to invest in the city. As a result, all workers depend on the adherence to non-conflictive labor relations to secure their jobs. By adhering to the system of tolerance and hard work, laborers are expected to contribute in a collective effort to maintain their sources of employment and social reproduction.

The Chihuahua case reinforces Deborah Gould's explanation for the lack of political mobilization in cases where affective states continue to be framed by a passive emotional habitus. Gould illustrates this phenomenon with the gay's community fearful, shameful, and autonomous responses to the AIDS epidemic in the early and mid 1980s. Years later, the increasing number of deaths and government ignorance of the epidemic led to ACT UP's employment of more aggressive political strategies. In Chihuahua, affective states linked to unfavorable working conditions are manifested in emotions predisposed to tolerate and work hard in the hopes of personal advancement while being rewarded with a status of maturity. By using this framework of analysis, I contribute to the literature on Chihuahua's social movements literature, showing evidence of how a culture of mobilization/political passivity is maintained and reinforced in Chihuahua's maquiladora sector. The analysis of workers' emotional habitus is a key component in this contribution.

**DISCUSSION OF MAQUILADORA EMOTIONAL HABITUS**

The collective and "partly conscious emotional disposition"[122] of maquiladora workers to organize and mobilize in Chihuahua's maquiladora context does not exist. The labor culture of Chihuahua, the individualization of tasks and rewards along with the unfeasibility of legitimate workers' movements through labor unions does not provide a practical sense for effective action against transnational companies. The social context in Chihuahua "structures [workers'] individual and collective practices" to tolerate unsatisfactory working conditions. Additionally, workers feel compelled to work hard to achieve a better position within the plant or to receive favorable recommendations for future jobs. These efforts are part of important experiences for workers because they help them mature.

Maturity is an important element that helps resolve the tensions found among maquiladora workers. The aspects that workers do not like about maquiladoras, such as the long unstable working hours and low pay, must be negotiated with the benefits they receive from employment. For example, many workers indicated that they have "everything" because of maquiladora employment. This is where the concept of maturity helps resolve this contradiction. In other words, the dialectical relationship between a structure where employment is crucial for social reproduction and the practice of submitting oneself to difficult working conditions creates a tension that is resolved through feelings of maturity. Thus, this dialectical relationship shapes the dispositions to work hard and tolerate difficulties. At the same time, it unmakes the dispositions to complain or mobilize against sources of employment. These dynamics become the "rules of the game" in this context, leading to a sense of what is "normal" behavior.

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[122] Deborah Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 26-7.

The emotions attached to normativity are a powerful element in the constitution of a habitus. Emotions provide strong bodily sensations regarding behaviors one must do in order to fit in. In the context of maquiladoras, normativity involves working hard and tolerating difficult working conditions. Following the norms comes with its individual rewards, as seen in the interviews, which in exceptional cases can even turn into political appointments. The feelings of satisfaction derived from following the norm are translated into a sense of being mature.

In addition to the constitution of an emotional habitus predisposed to conform to normative behavior, the social and political position of maquiladora workers also has an impact. The dominant culture in Chihuahua values hard working, fighter attitudes. The ranchero and revolutionary ethos strives for autonomous control over its social reproduction; the long wars against Apaches and (later against) large landowners were a struggle that demanded a strong aggressive character against clearly identifiable enemies.

This characteristic of Chihuahua's political culture is reflected in its anti-centrist attitudes that were clearly evident during the unheeded request for help to the federal government during the war against the Apaches and the inception of revolutionary movements in the early twentieth century. A more contemporaneous manifestation of this autonomous aspect of the local culture emerged during electoral protests in 1986 and PAN gubernatorial victory in 1992. These electoral movements, according to Alberto Aziz, reflect the utilitarian nature of Chihuahua's political culture focused on specific demands.[123] The newly passed fiscal reform that eliminates border state's preferential tax rates has mobilized Chihuahua's businessmen against this centrist policy that will surely

[123] Alberto Aziz, *Los ciclos de la democracia* (Mexico D.F.: Porrúa, 2000).

materialize in electoral defeats for the PRI in this state.[124] Hence, the fighter attitude is evident in all levels of Chihuahua's society.

In the case of maquiladora workers, this attitude is reflected in their individual efforts to "get ahead". It does not translate into a struggle to improve their working conditions through mobilizations because it would mean attacking the very sources of employment—their source of social reproduction. Rather, workers strive to improve their working conditions by getting better jobs within the maquiladora complex. This form of oppression, then, reinforces a habitus of toleration. In other words, affective states are interpreted with normative social codes that lead to political passivity and a hard-worker attitude.

This analysis of the constitution of Chihuahua's maquiladora workers contributes to the general maquiladora literature and to the particular discussion on its working class by pointing out the personal perspectives and emotional states of workers. The social and political circumstances in which they live and work generate limited political horizons guided by social codes that punish complaints while rewarding hard-working attitudes. The normativity linked to these attitudes provides a fertile ground for the reproduction of the maquiladora model among its workers and Chihuahua's society at large. With this receptive social and political climate maquiladoras operate with the liberty to continue deregulating labor relations.

**ADDRESSING QUESTIONS FROM INTRODUCTION**

This case reveals that the poverty of resources is not the only element at work in the absence of mobilization, as suggested in the first chapter. Cultural and production

[124] Manuel Quezada, "Afecta particularmente a Chihuahua, la reforma fiscal aprobada por el Senado: Coparmex," *El Diario de Chihuahua*, November 2, 2012 accessed November 15, 2013, http://eldiariodechihuahua.mx/notas.php?seccion=El_Estado&f=2013/11/02&id=76b3d39e9b505e7838f9b1507ff04c66 .

factors are also at play in the construction of an emotional habitus that limits the political horizons of conceiving a mobilization. I had also posed the question concerning migrants' lack of mobilization experience in the realization of a movement as a factor. Rather than a lack of experience, the heterogeneity of workers (which migrants help create), the atomization of their new productive jobs, and their vulnerability to unemployment limit the opportunities to frame a collective response to potential grievances.

The atomization of production and rewards systems leaves open the possibility for individual acts of resistance that would be important to consider. One could interpret an exit from the maquiladora industry or even migration to another country an alternative form of resistance. María's note-taking strategies that antagonize Cessna's engineers is another individual way to improve her working conditions. However, these changes are minimal and rarely resulting in significant changes in working conditions at a plant or industry level. These individual strategies are mainly for individual benefit, given that workers no not even seek to change the maquiladora model. They realize that these plants are important job generators; that labor conflicts cause them to leave the city; and that other opportunities are difficult to come across. Hence, few see themselves as objects of exploitation, but rather, workers are content with the opportunity to get ahead (even if for a short period of time) with the help of maquiladora employment.

## FUTURE LINES OF INVESTIGATION

One important aspect that this study has unfortunately ignored is the special plight of women in the sector. As indicated in the introduction, women are vertically segregated into positions that pay less and are also more vulnerable to losing their jobs in times of

economic recession. In addition to this distressful pattern, women are often times the caregivers of their families. Thus, when children and family members get ill, women workers must either reduce their working hours (which is almost never permitted) or terminate their employment in order to attend their obligations at home. All the women I interviewed suffered in one way or another because of this issue. María indicated that the most difficult moments of working in maquiladoras is when her children get sick: "you cannot find anyone to care for them, because when children get sick, daycare centers will not accept them". Natalia, on the other hand, lost her job at a maquiladora because she missed days of work when her mother got sick. Sarah was denied a maquiladora job because her first daughter was too young and employers feared she would miss work.

The perspective of gender in maquiladora work remains a very important line of investigation, despite the reduction of their overwhelming majority in the first years of the model. Many domestic tasks are still delegated to women, many times interrupting their participation in the workforce. This is not only true of maquiladora workers, but more attention should be given as to how women in the maquiladora sector deal with unequal treatment at home and at the workplace in order to improve their working experiences. Unfortunately, time and space has prevented me from exploring these issues further in this study. However, in depth investigations using feminist approaches and methodologies will also provide more fruitful analyses than I feel prepared to make at the moment.

If a political mobilization emerges among maquiladora workers, it will be important to analyze how their emotional habitus changed in order to allow a change in political dispositions. As in the ACTUP case, a dramatic event or accumulation of grievances ultimately leads to affective states that are unsatisfactorily dealt with established social codes and "normal" forms of expression, i.e. emotional habitus. The

study of how these changes occur can provide valuable evidence on the emotional frameworks leading towards social mobilizations.

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